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THE ILLUSTRATED Sporting and Dramatic News.

LONDON, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1878.

THE LOVING CUP.

“We bid you all a hearty welcome.”

Ho! sleek dispenser of the vinous flow,
High priest of Bacchus, whose magician's rod
Can ope the portals of the shades below,
And summon spirits from their dark abode;—
The juicy harvest of your jovial god
No longer let the dusky webs enshrine,
But suave assent to our petition nod,
And seals relax, and envious wire untwine,
And broach thy mellowed vats of ever rosy wine.

Ho! paunchy pantler, mix with cunning hand
Each varied essence that the grape distils,
Refined by age, mellifluously bland,
Or fiery fierce—the growth of sunny hills,
Or valleys deep—what rich aroma fills
From blended flavours all thy hermit cell;
Where ever and anon thine unctuous gills
Wetting, with educated taste and smell,
Thou dost essay thy cups most diligently well!

Ho! 'dizened page, like Ganymede of old,
Fit servitor for gods on festal days;
Bear to the Master of the Feast in gold
The spicy draught—awhile the trumpet brays,
And high on dais all his wealth displays
Of robe and jewel each uprising guest;
And bidden silence conversation stays,
At deep-voiced Ceremony's stern behest,
Who stands embodied there with hammer ribbon-dressed

Ho! let it circle with the sun—but first
Observe the rite—the nearest to my lord
Upholds its cover, as he slakes his thirst,
Lest in his hand there lurk the treacherous sword,
('Tis thus barbaric usage we record
When of his life each reveller went in fear);
But hearken to that hospitable word:
“Lords, ladies, gentlemen, to all good cheer
I drink, and bid you all a hearty welcome here!”

So from the founder of this Christmas feast
Rings forth the gratulation of our host
To all alike, the greatest and the least:
“We bid you hearty welcome,”—welcome most
Now at this chartered carnival of frost,
When all is cold without, but warm within,
When charity forbears to count the cost
Of hosts of poor and hungry taken in,
And warfare 'gainst the fiends of misery and sin.

“We bid you hearty welcome”—readers all,
Kind, gentle, sympathetic; nor refuse
Our Christmas greeting to the men of gall,
Who fain would make us tremble in our shoes
By paper pellets of polite abuse,
Hurled at our peccadilloes; we are young,
Still pleading immaturity's excuse,
Nor wince 'neath waspish accusations flung
Against our maiden shield by every random tongue.

“We bid you hearty welcome”—royal pair,
Gay Recreation's daughters, Sport and Stage,
Twin Queens, our glowing sympathies who share
In thoughtless youth or meditative age;
Man's labours in this earthly pilgrimage
'Tis yours to lighten, playing many parts,
Charming alike the dullard and the sage,
And pleasing all with your untiring arts,
For thus ye do “divide and govern” human hearts.

To each a hearty welcome, and to all
Content to follow in their jocund train;—
See, like a steed fresh loosened from his stall,
How Sport comes pricking o'er the breezy plain,
With joyous shout like that which thrills amain
When pedagogues relax their tyrant sway,
And Boyhood bursts the tether of his chain—
Hurrah! a long and sunny holiday,
With all its golden hours to consecrate to play!

She comes! what trophies deck her whirling car,
Or follow, bound to its triumphal wheels;
The steed, caparisoned for racing war,
With plaited mane and many twinkling heels
Light armoured; by his side the gazehound steals
(Well matched for speed and symmetry the pair),
While close at hand the merry music peals
Of baying packs that from his covert-lair
The ruddy “varmint” urge or press the flying hare.

Strewn at her feet, in wild confusion lies
Each implement that her pursuit attends;
The deadly tube for every bird that flies,
The rod that springing to its quarry bends;
The oar its lithe grace to the trophy lends,
Of every shape and size the “flying ball;”
And all of Pastime's hundred odds and ends
That childhood, youth, and riper age enthrall,
Are gathered there, the crown of Sport's high festival.

And there, twin-pillar of Amusement's throne,
Arrays her ranks the Genius of the Stage,
Now, in the vein of Tragedy, alone
Soliloquising in her noble rage;
Now tracing back the grave historic page,
Now moving all to sympathetic glee,
Or haply ranging lower to engage
Th' applause of babes, she revels fancy-free,
While Pantomimic leaves adorn the Christmas tree.

We bid you hearty welcome—powers benign,
By whose sweet influences cherished best,
The course of life, in one harmonious line
Spun by the Fates, is charged with double zest;
What were this heritage of “wild unrest,”
Without the soft unbending of its hold
On frail humanity too hardly press'd?
For who would hug his fetters—though of gold?
Who would himself for aye in his own essence fold?

So may ye, hand in hand, propitious twain,
Stern Labour's cold monotony relieve,
Enrich our days—as with soft summer rain,
And gild our dreams—as glow of summer's eve,
Not killing toil, but granting kind reprieve;
That so, by you upheld on either side
With loving hands that firmly interweave,
Gently adown the river may we glide,
Safe to our distant bourne on life's eventful tide.

AMPHION.

TOLD IN THE SADDLE-ROOM.

BY WILLMOTT DIXON.

IT was undignified, perhaps, but then there was no help for it. My uncle and aunt, worthy and hospitable as they were in other respects, had a rooted aversion to tobacco. There was consequently no smoking-room in Chiltern House, and those who wished to enjoy the fragrant weed were fain to content themselves with the saddle-room or the kitchen. The latter was not available till the servants had retired for the night, and the saddle-room, therefore, was honoured with the patronage of those guests at Chiltern House to whom life without tobacco was like veal without stuffing. The guests were seldom numerous, and for the most part of the old fogey type, but at Christmas-time I was generally asked down to stay for the week's hunting, and two or three young cousins were usually invited at the same time. Another Christmas fixture was General Maxwell—a soldier of the old school, elderly and grey when I knew him, but a fine, hale, active old gentleman, a keen sportsman and a genial companion. The General might, I believe, have been chosen to do so, have smoked his cheroot in my aunt's dining-room, so established a favourite was he at Chiltern House—but he did not care to take advantage of his position, and, besides, to smoke in dignified solitude was not congenial to him. So he joined us in the saddle-room.

A very comfortable den that saddle-room was, and a very cosy and cheerful party we were as we sat around the blazing fire—with all those soothing concomitants of tobacco which the smoker loves. I have been in many a more pretentious and luxuriously fitted smoking-room, but with none are there linked such pleasant associations of comfort and companionship as with that old saddle-room.

We were sitting, as usual, round the fire in this smoking-den of ours one evening after a very hard day's hunting, and the talk of course turned upon the incidents of the day. Suddenly old General Maxwell turned to me and asked who was the man on the splendid bay mare who had headed the field throughout a clipping good run of seventy minutes.

“I believe he is a Captain Blissett,” I said.

I noticed the General “prick up his ears” at once, and look interested. Then, after a pause, he asked:—

“Blissett, did you say?”

“Yes,” I said; “do you know anything of him?”

“Well,” replied the General, slowly sipping his negus, “I can't say I do, but I've reason to know the name—and it's not a very common one.”

“His father is, or was—for I'm not sure whether he's alive still—Colonel Blissett, a retired Indian officer.”

“Then, by Jove!” exclaimed the General, slapping his leg, “it's the same—old Joe Blissett, I'll bet any money, and this is his son. Does he live near here?—the father, I mean—for, by Jove! if he does, I'll go over and see him for the sake of old times.”

“No; he lives—or did live—in Shropshire, I believe,” I returned.

There was a queer humorous smile playing round the General's lips as he looked into the fire and muttered to himself: “Old Joe Blissett, by Jove!—old Joe Blissett turned up again. He must be well over eighty now,” said he, suddenly, looking up at me, “for it's forty years ago since it happened.”

“Indeed!” I exclaimed, without the faintest notion of what the General was alluding to.

“Yes—forty years ago, if it's a day,” said the General, musingly, as he fixed his eyes again on the fire.

“May I ask what it was?” I asked, after a pause, for I perceived that the General was relapsing into a reverie.

“Well, the queerest thing that I ever was mixed up with in all my life,” said the General, laughing. “But as it is no secret, and as I've excited your curiosity, I'll tell you the story. It is one of many a time rec'd when Christmas comes round, and one I shall keep in lively remembrance till my dying day.”

“I was a little over seventeen when I joined the —th Regiment of Foot, and after I had taken the first gloss off my uniform by eighteen months' idle soldiering in England I was ordered off to India. The regiment was quartered at a station far up the country, and it was there I first made the acquaintance of Major Blissett. ‘The Major,’ as he was called *par excellence*, was one of the “institutions” of the regiment, as well he might be after two-and-twenty years' service in it. He might have exchanged and got promotion half-a-dozen times, but he stuck to the old corps, and the —th was proud of him for his loyalty to his first colours—proud of him and fond of him, too, in spite of his being a rigid disciplinarian, a martinet of the strictest school, never known to condone an offence. But he was a fine officer, full of pluck, true grit to the back-bone; and with a rough, soldierly good-nature about him, which made him a favourite with officers and men. I shall not forget the first time I saw him on parade—a hard-featured, iron-grey veteran, who might be any age from forty to sixty, though in point of fact he had barely turned forty. I came in for a very sharp reprimand, I remember, at my very first parade, and I hastily set down the Major in consequence as an irascible, particular, fussy old woman. I soon found out my mistake. There was precious little of the ‘old woman’ about the Major. He was a desperate stickler for his dignity among the men, but at mess he was one of the most jovial, good-tempered fellows I ever met—one of the old school, though, with a blunt, forcible way of expressing himself that would hardly go down with your polished, refined gentlemen of to-day.

“There was a tendency to laziness among the subs of ‘ours,’ as I suppose there always is more or less among subs, and it was a rather favourite device to sham sickness, or to speak more elegantly, ‘affect indisposition.’ Now if there was one thing which annoyed the Major more than another it was this excuse of illness. He did not believe in any form of illness except fever and cholera, and if a man were not absolutely as weak as an

infant he considered him fit for duty. I've often heard him exclaim, with emphatic indignation, ‘Indisposed, indeed! All rubbish; what's ‘indisposed’ I'd like to know? Young fellows complaining of such paltry ailments, indeed! Why, look at me, an old man, sir! I don't get sick; you young fellows ought to be ashamed of confessing yourselves more delicate than an old fellow like me.’

“A most illogical mode of reasoning this was, for the Major was as tough a subject as ever trod shoe-leather, hardened to the climate, and proof against pretty nearly every ailment under the sun. But it was his foible to describe himself as an old and infirm man in comparison with us his juniors, and we so far humoured him that we always affected to look ashamed when he administered this favourite rebuke of his.

“Our station was one of the most unhealthy in India, and I had not been there long before cholera broke out among the troops. In three days we lost four-and-twenty men, and all of us went about with the disagreeable apprehension that our lives might not be worth twelve hours' purchase. There was no shamming illness then I can tell you. Every man tried to think himself as healthy as possible. And then we found the value of such a man as the Major. Calm and strict and soldierlike as ever, he appeared to ignore the fact that a deadly pestilence was in our midst; no allusion to it ever escaped him. If a man were absent from parade, and in answer to the Major's inquiry the explanation was ‘Down with the cholera,’ not a muscle moved in the stout old veteran's face: ‘All right,’ he would say, and then without further remark pass on. His imperturbable coolness had a visible effect upon officers and men. We were ashamed to show symptoms of panic with that man carrying himself so dauntlessly and coolly.

“But one evening just before mess a rumour spread that the Major himself had been seized with cholera. The tidings were soon confirmed; he was absent from mess. The news made us uneasy, though we had such faith in the Major's hardy constitution that we were all confident that he would pull through it. He had passed unscathed through nearly every form of Indian disease. He was reported to have had sharp touches of Asiatic cholera several times, and therefore we had no very serious apprehensions that he would succumb to this attack. But we missed him sorely that night. His cheery voice and even flow of spirits were more than ever needed to keep our courage up, for we young hands were inclined to be a bit despondent and down-in-the-mouth, with death at our very doors, waiting, for aught we knew, to summon any one of us at a few hours' notice. No one who has not experienced the sensation can possibly conceive the feelings of a man when he first finds himself face to face with deadly pestilence, to which he is conscious that he may at any minute fall a victim, more especially when that pestilence brings death with it so terribly soon as Asiatic cholera does. It was therefore excusable in us subs to display symptoms of uncomfortableness, to use no stronger term, in the presence of such a grim visitor.

“But not even the Major's constitution was proof against this last attack of the formidable and insidious foe. Like a thunder-clap the news fell upon us, when at parade the next morning we learnt that *the Major was dead*! We could hardly believe it—a benumbed feeling of astonishment and stupefaction came over us. The Major *dead*! We could not realise the fact. But it was too true; after a few hours of intense agony he had expired just before daybreak. To say that his death threw a gloom over the whole regiment would be to convey but a very feeble idea of the effect which the news produced. It *stunned* us all. It was not regret we felt: we had no room in our bewildered brains to entertain that feeling, though the Major, in a way, was a favourite with all. It was, as I have said, a sort of terrified astonishment that came over us. The fact of his having been thus suddenly stricken down—a man thoroughly inured to the climate, with a constitution which had hitherto defied every disease—spread a panic among us. How were we, who had only just entered on our Indian life, to escape?

“We were a dreary party that night at mess. If we had been a lot of condemned criminals to be executed next morning we could not have been much gloomier. Now and then there were fitful flashes of ghastly merriment as the wine went rapidly round, but they quickly died away, and left the gloom deeper than before.

“The wine seemed to have no effect upon us but to produce a sort of maudlin melancholy. And really I can't help smiling now as I think what a desperately dismal company we were. It was getting late in the evening when the man who sat next me, a lieutenant named Cleveland, touched my arm, and said in a sepulchral voice—

“‘Maxwell, let's go and see the Major.’”

“I looked at him for a moment to be sure that he really meant what he said. His face wore a serious, solemn expression, which left no doubt that he was in earnest. On the other side of me was a wild Irishman, named O'Brien, usually a devil-may-care sort of fellow, but that night his mercurial spirits had fallen to zero. Before I had time to answer, he looked eagerly across me at Cleveland, and said excitedly—

“‘I'll go with ye, Cleveland!’”

“And without another word they rose. Mechanically I rose also, and followed them. I saw O'Brien take a bottle of brandy and three glasses, and I had a dim notion that he was half afraid to carry out his purpose, and was therefore providing himself with Dutch courage to screw him to the sticking-point. Slowly and silently the three of us repaired to the Major's quarters, where his dead body lay awaiting burial in the course of a few hours. The door of the Major's apartment was unfastened. We entered—there was no one there; but a light was burning in the bedroom. We stopped for a moment, and, without speaking, O'Brien poured out three glasses of brandy. Each of us drained his glass at a draught, and then we walked into the bedroom. Calm and peaceful was the old warrior's face as he lay in his coffin; and there was very little of that dreadful discolouration which we had expected. We stood looking at him for some minutes, and then, for the first time, I think, we thought of him sadly and regretfully—thought how we should miss that upright, soldierly figure—that brisk, active step—that sharp, clear voice. Then O'Brien broke the silence,—

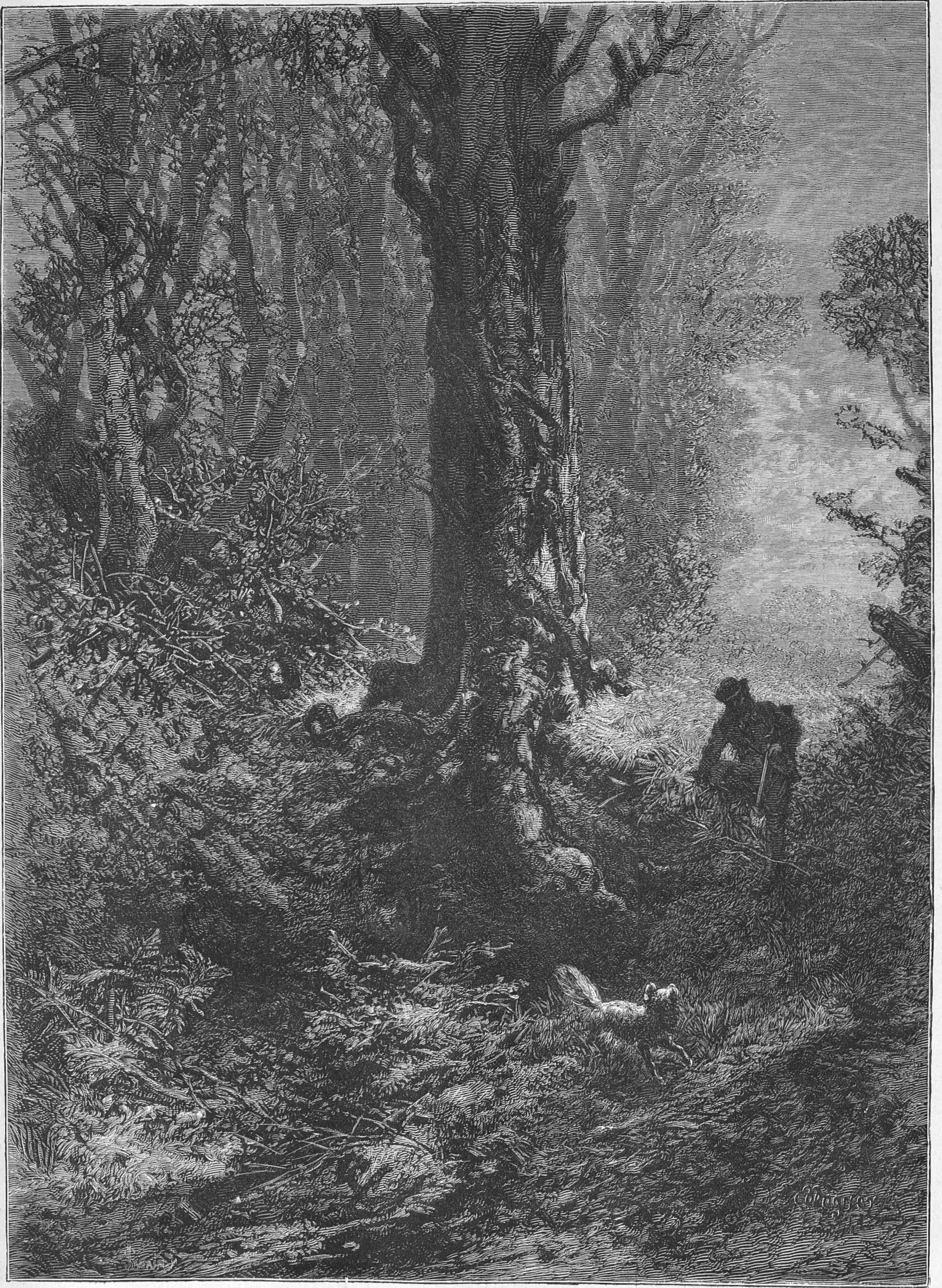
“‘Let's drink a last toast to the Major,’ said he.

“He filled the three glasses, and handed us each one. We looked at one another and at the Major, and drank the requiem toast. There was a queer, wild look about O'Brien, which made me uneasy. I saw him fill his glass again; then in a hoarse whisper he muttered,—

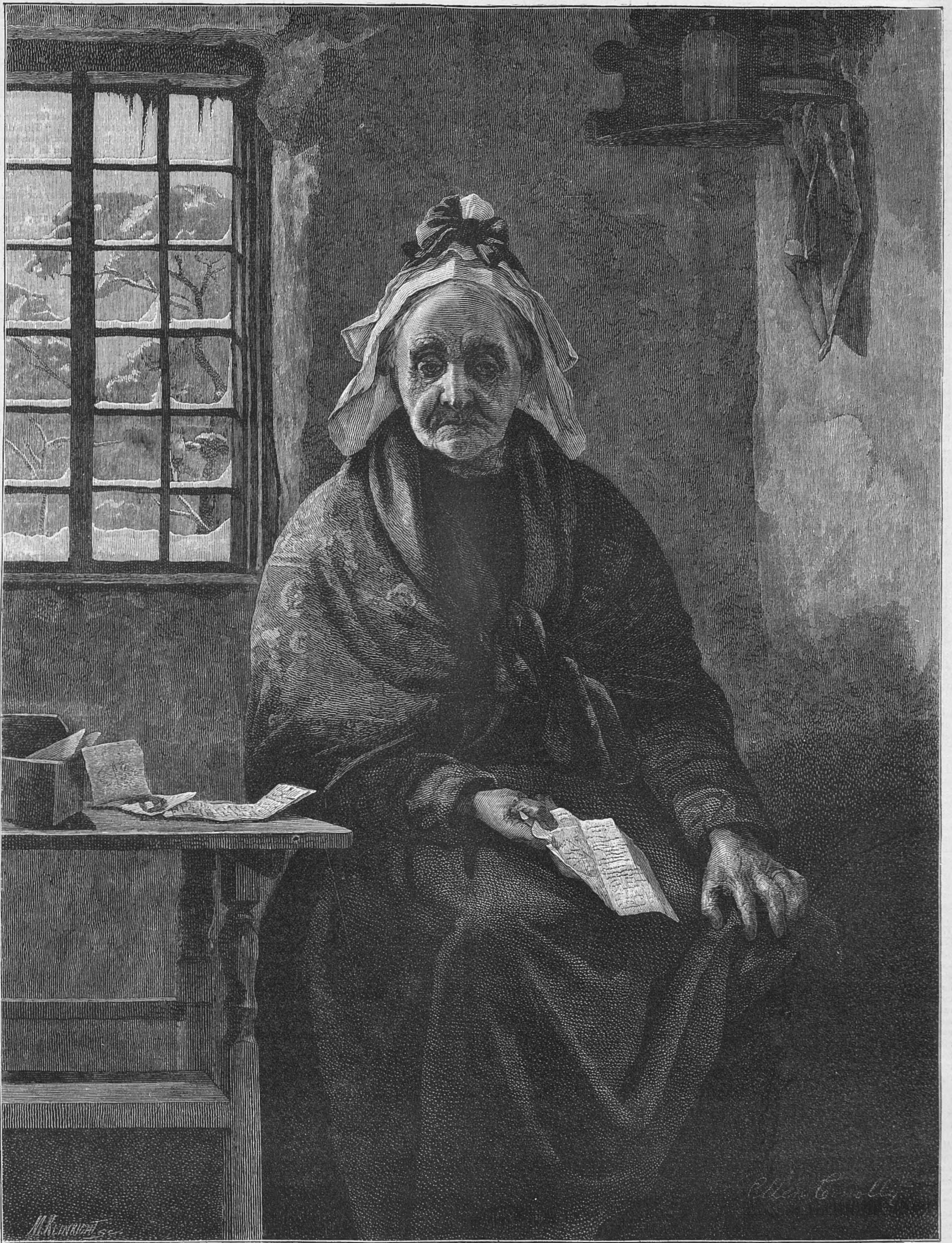
“‘Join us, Major, for the last time! By God! you shall.’”

“Before either of us could lift a hand to stop him, he bent down, placed the glass to the dead veteran's lips, forced it between the teeth, and emptied its contents. Then he dashed bottle and glass on the floor and walked hurriedly out. Cleveland remained staring horror-struck at the recumbent figure in the coffin. I took him by the arm and led him away, for I too was not a little shocked at what I considered an act of sacrilege to the dead, and we both turned into our quarters to sleep.

“How long I had been asleep I do not know; but I started up suddenly from a sound slumber, dimly conscious of a confused noise somewhere. I sat up and listened. There was a tremendous hubbub going on in the barrack-yard. The commotion was so strange and unusual that I hastily dressed myself and went out to see what was the cause of it. Two or thr



THE TWO POACHERS.



CHRISTMAS REMEMBRANCES.

An aged woman in a wintry room—
Frost on the pane, without the whirling snow—
Reading old letters of her far-off youth,
Of sorrows past, and joys of long ago.

WILLIAM COX BENNET

officers who had been similarly disturbed joined me. We found half the men in various stages of undress in the yard; scared looks and white faces met us on all sides. But no one could give any explanation of the disturbance. To all our enquiries we could obtain no satisfactory answer. The men did not seem to know what it was that had aroused them. At last I caught sight of a man who was gesticulating wildly, and jabbering as fast as his tongue could go to a group of terrified listeners. I rushed up to him, shook him sharply by the shoulder, and said sternly,—

"Come, what's all this noise about? What's the matter?"

"Turning to me a face which had upon it the most ludicrous look of fright I ever saw, the man literally shrieked—

"Oh, the Major, sir, the Major! Oh! the Lord preserve us all from the Major!"

"To my reiterated questions I could obtain no other answer than these incoherent ejaculations. The fellow seemed to have been frightened almost out of his senses. In a state of complete mystification my companions and myself hastened to the Major's quarters. Some little distance from the door, which was half open, stood a group of the bolder privates craning their necks as if to have a peep at some object with which they evidently had no desire to make a closer acquaintance. Passing them quickly, we burst breathlessly into the Major's room. Never, were I to live to a hundred, can I forget the sight I then saw, and the thrill, the extraordinary thrill which it sent through my nerves. We might all have been suddenly turned to stone, as by a Medusa's head, we stopped short so abruptly and stood so motionless, with blanched cheeks and mouths wide open. Overturned on the floor lay the coffin, whilst in the middle of the room stood the Major or his ghost, we were not at first prepared to say which. He looked ghastly beyond description—his face a livid purple, his eyes a dull leaden colour, a stream of blood trickling down his chin. We might well be rooted to the spot with horror and amazement. The man whose funeral was to have taken place an hour or two later stood before us apparently alive. How long we should have remained staring at him in speechless horror I cannot say, had not the silence been broken by the apparition itself, which, with a grim smile, addressed us thus—

"What, you thought you'd got rid of old Joe Blissett, did you? Not yet, I hope—thank you all the same. I'm in no hurry to be put under the turf, and, with your kind leave, I should like to have a year or two more of life."

"Then pointing to the coffin, he added—'But here, I say, send some of those gibbering, gaping idiots out there to take away that—that—damned thing. It gives a fellow the horrors to look at it. Ugh! To think that I should have been within an ace of being screwed down in that—that beastly box, with the breath of life not out of my body. Come, don't stand there looking at me as if I were a ghost. I tell you I'm the real, genuine Joe Blissett. Look at the blood, you idiots, streaming from my nose. I believe I've broken it tumbling out of that infernal case you had packed me up in as if I were a mummy going to the British Museum. Did you ever see a ghost with a bloody nose? Come, give me a hand, one of you, with this coat. Bless if I don't tremble and shiver as if I had an ague fit! Come, Maxwell, Thompson, Baldock, one of you help me into this coat. I want to breathe a whiff of fresh air, to take the death-taste out of my mouth.'

"It was the Major in the flesh, there could be no doubt of that, though his voice was very shaky and hollow and ghost-like. However, there he was alive—he had risen from the dead by some means or other, and without waiting to speculate further on his marvellous resuscitation, I stepped forward and helped him into his coat. Then, after washing the blood which flowed from his face—his nose, by the way, was knocked quite out of shape, he had come such a terrible 'cropper' on the floor—he took my arm, for he was not quite himself yet, and walked into the barrack-yard. It was daylight by this time, and the sight of the Major leaning on my arm reassured the men, and convinced them that it was no ghost they saw.

"A bumper of neat brandy soon revived the Major, and braced up his nerves, which had been not a little shaken by the discovery of his narrow escape from being buried alive. He was very weak, and looked in good sooth the ghost of his former self, but nothing would dissuade him from appearing at parade. There were several of the officers who had not been apprised of the Major's return to life; among them were Cleveland and O'Brien, and it was exquisitely comical to see their faces when, on hurrying to parade, they saw the Major at his post, as if nothing had happened. At first they rubbed their eyes, and thought they must still be dreaming, but the stern voice reprimanding them for unpunctuality was so unmistakably the Major's that they were speedily forced to admit that the scene was a waking reality. The Major seemed to enjoy the joke, and could hardly keep his countenance as he encountered the looks of undisguised amazement, not unmingled with terror, that met him on all sides. Parade over, he was, however, overwhelmed with congratulations, and I am sure there was not a single soul in the regiment that was not heartily pleased at the Major's unexpected restoration to life.

"Of course we were all anxious to know how it happened. The Major could give us no very lucid explanation. He said that he woke as if from a long sleep—he lay in a sort of doze for some time—and then, trying to turn, he found that he was in a very narrow and contracted space. He felt about with his hands. He touched wood on all sides; he could not make it out. Then he got alarmed, as an inkling of the true state of affairs dawned upon him. He made a desperate effort to get up, and in doing so rolled, coffin and all, on to the floor, where his nose came into such sharp contact with the hard boards as to break the nasal bone. Shortly afterwards the men entered to screw down the coffin, and were frightened out of their wits at finding the object of their funeral intentions not lying peacefully in his coffin, but sitting bolt upright on the bed glaring at them, while he attempted to staunch, with a corner of his shroud, the copious stream from his wounded nose. A round oath scattered them in all directions, and they fled, carrying everywhere the report that they had seen a hideous ghost in the major's room.

"We at first tried to keep secret the fact of our 'waking' the Major, as O'Brien called it. But it oozed out, and the regimental surgeon, whom I believe to this day to have been indignant that a man whom he had reported dead should have had the impertinence to come to life again, openly asserted that it was the glass of brandy poured down the Major's throat which restored his suspended animation. Had it not been for that, he must inevitably have exchanged his singular trance for actual death by being buried alive. And as we were thus providentially the means of saving the Major's life, we did not altogether regret the extraordinary and perhaps not very creditable circumstances attending his 'wake.'

"There! that's why the name of Joe Blissett has a strong interest for me still, after the lapse of forty years."

There was silence for a minute or two, and another of our party remarked,—

"A gruesome tale, General!"

"But there's a grim sort of humour about it too," said I.

"Yes, there is," rejoined the general; "but very grim, I confess."

And with that remark I have no doubt the candid reader will be disposed to agree.

THE NETHERSTOWE MYSTERY.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

By MRS. S. R. TOWNSHEND MAYER,

Author of "Sir Hubert's Marriage," "The Fatal Inheritance," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

A CORPSE-CANDLE.

"WHAT! exile myself from town at this time of year of all others? Give up the Christmas parties, and shut myself in a lonely country house where I don't know a soul, and work hard all the holiday time! Hang it, the thing's preposterous. I won't do it."

"Very well, dear boy. Take it or leave it. The loss is yours. Only remember, it's the last time I'll exert myself to do a fellow a good turn. I cracked you up to the skies to the old man, and said you were the best hand in England—in fact, the only one—at what he wanted. It's the sort of thing you've been always wishing for, and I thought you would jump at it. However, please yourself and you'll please me. I must tell him I made a mistake, and he can look for somebody else. Of course I shall seem a howling idiot."

"That will be nothing new, old boy," I observed pleasantly. "But don't be rash. I suppose I must go. I only had my grumble—it's an Englishman's privilege. I may not find it so bad, after all. Of course, in a house like that there will be some sort of family gathering."

"I never heard that there was any family to gather."

"By Jove! There ought to be an opening, then. Is the Squire a genial old card? The sort of fellow to take a fancy to a good-looking youth, of engaging address, and adopt him as his heir?"

"You'd better try," said my friend Frank, drily; "I never asked him to adopt me. The only thing he seems to care about is keeping up his place. I was there six weeks sketching all the points, and I daresay you will be twice as long over this new whim. Well, good-bye. Look me up before you go."

I was serving my apprenticeship as a literary man-of-all-work, ready to undertake anything, from *The Times*' money article to a triquet on Lady Blanche Broadacres. But in my secret soul I believed I had a specialty, and that it was for family history, enriched by historico-poetic-antiquarian lore.

I started for Netherstowe, resolved to return with fame in one pocket and money in the other.

I arrived there on a very "drear-nighted December" indeed.

The Priory loomed vast and gloomy through the gathering darkness. A responsible-looking elderly gentleman, afterwards revealed as Mr. Belton, the Squire's butler and personal attendant, received me, and told off a son of Anak in hair-powder and calves, to conduct me to my room. A bright comfortable room, boasting one of Morris's wall-papers, and the latest improvements in lounging-chairs and writing-tables.

"The gong will sound in about ten minutes, sir," observed James, as he withdrew; and I forthwith plunged madly into an elaborate toilet, wondering how large the party would be, and trusting that a conversable, pretty-looking girl would fall to my share.

James was in attendance to conduct me through a labyrinth of corridors and stairs, richly carpeted, crimson lined, relieved here and there by a statue, a painting, a stand of evergreens; well-lighted, warmed, decorated—and empty.

At last he threw open the doors of a huge dining-room, with enough plate on the sideboard for a civic guild, and enough room round the table for a staff corps. It was carefully laid for—one.

The sight came upon me like a shower-bath on a January morning: the shock, the chill, but not the after-glow. I hesitated a moment before taking my seat.

"Am I not to have the pleasure of seeing Mr. De Morgue?" I asked the solemn butler.

"My master never dines, sir," was the reply.

"Never dines! Good heaven," I thought, "how does he get through the winter evenings?"

I shall never forget that dinner—its length, its solitude, its splendour.

If the dining-room was bad, the drawing-room was worse—a glittering solitude, with its gilt mouldings and azure panels, its one fire in remote perspective, its one small chandelier lighted, its slender-legged, high-backed furniture in pinnacles of delicate chintz, looking like Doré's *drôles* about to perform a weird and ghostly dance.

My lonely figure, reflected in many mirrors, looked indescribably absurd. I soon grew tired of contemplating it, and requested to be reconducted to my room.

While James was making up the fire, I drew aside the window curtains, to see how the park looked by moonlight. But the night was pitch dark, and the view a gulf of blackness. Only on the dim horizon gleamed something too large, and bright, and steady for a star.

"What is that light in the distance?" I inquired. "Surely the station cannot be seen from here?"

"That is the family Mausoleum, sir," was the cheering reply. "There is always a light burning there, day and night, all the year round."

CHAPTER II.

MY MYSTERIOUS VISITANT.

"Colours seen by candlelight," says Mrs. Browning, "do not look the same by day." But the morning impressions made by Netherstowe in no way contradicted the evening. The whole house, so far as I saw it, was handsome, admirably kept up, and deserted. It should have been bright with happy faces and loud with merry voices. In four-and-twenty hours I found its luxurious loneliness more depressing than the wildest ruin.

Breakfast, like dinner, was prepared for me alone. Mechanically I made the same inquiry about my host.

"My master never breakfasts, sir," replied Mr. Belton, with the same portentous gravity.

He never breakfasted, and he never dined! What did he do? Did he live on grains of rice and midnight visits to graveyards, like the uncomfortable woman in the "Arabian Nights"?

At lunch, at dinner, when the dinner-hour at length arrived, I was still alone. The day seemed interminable. At last I said desperately—

"If this sort of thing goes on, I shall go mad. I'll see the crazy old curmudgeon to-morrow, if I break into his room by violence, and tell him—"

"I could not think of giving you so much trouble," said a cool sarcastic voice behind me.

I jumped up and faced round, with an involuntary apology for the peculiar form of expression I had made use of.

"Pray do not mention it," replied the apparition. "Recluse though I am, I know too much of the manners of the present generation to expect verbal courtesy from the young. May I inquire what you so particularly wished to say to me?"

Mr. De Morgue was tall and spare, with a slight stoop, thin aquiline features, an obstinate mouth, and dark eyes peering mali-

ciously from beneath shaggy eyebrows. He had a wizard look, increased by the black velvet cap which partly covered his thin white hair, and the long dressing-gown whose crimson folds waved behind him.

His *tout ensemble* did not tend to relieve my embarrassment. But I managed stammeringly to explain that anxiety to enter on my duties had betrayed me into undue emphasis. And that I only desired instructions as to the work for which I was there.

"If you will have the goodness to follow me," said my host, "I will give you all that you require. You must pardon my entering on business details at this unseasonable time, for I do not keep the usual hours, and you will probably not see me to-morrow."

And he preceded me through the smaller drawing-room by which he had entered, to a large neighbouring apartment of a sombre and severe aspect.

Seating himself at the head of the table, Mr. De Morgue pointed to several large packets of letters before him, and a formidable array of tin boxes ranged along the floor.

"Here you will find the archives of my house for many generations," he said with a sort of icy satisfaction. "Title deeds and documents of every description, private correspondence, and records of public services. These I wish you in the first place to classify chronologically, throwing aside all you consider unimportant, and retaining such as may in your opinion be woven into an interesting history. When you have done so I shall be able to judge approximately of your capacity for writing that history."

Having spoken thus, he vanished; that is to say, he went out through a small door concealed by heavy hangings. I wondered how the household in general liked their lord and master to move in such eccentric orbits.

Next morning saw me fairly launched on my chosen career and beginning to feel an absorbing interest in my work.

About a week after I began my acquaintance with the ancestral De Morgues, as I was going away to dress, a door at the further end of the dimly-lighted room, opened, and a figure glided with slow and noiseless steps to just beyond the circle of light made by my shaded writing lamp; and seating itself in one of the antique carved chairs, rested a fair cheek on a fair hand.

It was the figure of a girl of seventeen, slender and tall, with the resolute mouth I had learnt to know so well in those long rows of family portraits, with a mass of fair hair piled high above her shapely head, with pale cheeks and dark shadowy eyelashes, which hid the downcast eyes. Her dress was some white shining stuff of antique fashion, and the lamplight kindled the secret fire of rubies glowing in her ears and on her breast.

I was not more surprised than delighted by this visit. The young lady's extreme beauty, and the manner of her entrance, supplied just the element of romance which had been wanting at Netherstowe. Who could she be? I never heard that Mr. De Morgue had a daughter. But then I had heard nothing about his family.

Presently she turned over some of the papers which strewed the table, and asked in a low voice:—

"Do not you find it very lonely here?"

"Not at all," I said, enthusiastically. "I am too much interested in my work."

"Your work? Ah! you are writing a history of the family, are you not?"

"I am preparing the materials for one."

"You have papers—letters—from most of the family?"

"From almost all, I believe."

"Have you got very far—say, to the last generation?"

"Oh! not half way. The papers are so numerous, and, you see, the earlier ones take so much longer to decipher and arrange."

She scarcely seemed to heed my explanation.

"Will you have to search so far?"

"I suppose so—yes, undoubtedly."

"Have you the late letters here?" she asked, looking lingeringly, wistfully at the piles that heaped my desk.

"Most probably; but unexamined as yet, of course. I am working chronologically."

"I detain you," she said, with gentle courtesy, as the gong sounded. And she rose, with a slight inclination of her lovely head.

"Pray do not hurry," I urged, eagerly, blunderingly, unwilling to lose a moment of her presence. "It is such a pleasure—such a rare pleasure—to see, to speak to anyone here."

"Oh, we shall meet again," she replied with a faint smile. And as she did not resume her seat, I left the library.

We did meet again—often, often. Not at dinner, as I had ventured to hope. Not at all that evening; but afterwards, "between the daylight and the dusk;" or later, in the large rooms whose partial lighting made a twilight of its own, I used to see her constantly. And the day became a lost and dark day to me on which I did not see her.

I never met her with others, never saw her in a full light, never close by my side. We shared none of the every-day pursuits which throw people together, no rides, or walks, or songs, or laughter. Yet this shadowy distance seemed a bond rather than a barrier between us, for it made her more exclusively my own.

Yes, my own, I learnt to call her in my heart, though I did not even know her name. As the days grew into weeks I began to watch for her with feverish eagerness. Sometimes she did not come, and then the world was a blank.

This feeling, this infatuation, if you will, ripened fast in an atmosphere of silent mystery.

One evening when I entered the drawing room I saw the gleam of her white dress in the smaller room beyond, and advance eagerly. But as I approached she retreated beyond the radius of the furthest light, and seated herself within the perfumed dusk of the conservatory. Then she returned to the subject which had occupied her on our first meeting.

"How do you progress with your work?" she asked.

"Slowly, I am afraid."

"You have not come to the recent letters."

"No; not yet."

She sighed.

"To tell the truth—may I—I will you be angry if I tell the truth?"

"Why should I be angry?"

"To tell the truth, then, I fear I am not very anxious to get to those recent letters."

"Why not?"

"Because—I cannot tell why—I have a fancy, an impression, that then I shall lose you—I shall see you for the last time."

There was a moment's silence. Then she asked, in a voice which, unless my hopes deceived me, faltered a little—

"And what if it were so?"

"If it were so!" I repeated, a sudden impulse mastering me, and driving prudence and reason to the winds. "It must never be so! I cannot lose you—I will not. My words may sound madly presumptuous, but it is the madness of love. I love you with all my soul."

She gave a low, incredulous, half-scornful laugh.

"Love me? Ah! you know not what you are saying. Love a shadow—a nameless vision?"

"I said it might seem madness, but it will be lifelong madness—longer than life, and stronger than death. Only give me the

smallest hope! I will wait—I will work—I will endure any probation you may require, submit to any test you may propose.”

I thought she wavered. I took a hasty step forward, but a warning gesture restrained me. She paused, and seemed thinking deeply. Her brows were knit, her eyes fixed on the ground.

“You are brave?” she asked, at last.

“Try me.”

“You wish to be tried? You would do anything to prove your—what you call your love?”

“Anything in the world—or out of it.”

“Meet me, then, alone, at midnight, on Christmas Eve, in the Mausoleum.”

CHAPTER III.

LOST TO NAME AND FAME.

“Mrs. White,” I said to the good-natured old housekeeper, the cheeriest and least abnormal member of Mr. De Morgue’s establishment. “Mrs. White, are you particularly busy just now? I should like to speak to you.”

I had grown desperate. Since that strange tryst was plighted I had seen nothing of my mysterious visitor; and if I could not see her I must hear of her. If I could not talk to her I must talk of her.

“Mrs. White, has Mr. De Morgue a daughter?”

“A daughter! Dear, no, sir, he has never been married.”

“Then who is the young lady staying in the house?”

“Young lady, sir? There’s no young lady—there’s no one in the house but master and you.”

“That is nonsense,” said I sharply, “when I see her almost every evening.”

Mrs. White looked as if she thought me out of my senses.

“Indeed, sir, you are mistaken,” she repeated earnestly. “There has been no young lady in this house for more than twenty years.”

“She is here, I assure you, nearly every evening,” I said, with forced composure. “I have seen her in the library, the drawing-rooms, and the conservatory. She wears a white dress, with ruby ornaments. She is slender and fair, with heaps of golden hair, and dark eyes. She is pale—but, pooh! words are absurd—hundreds of girls look like that. See here!”

I had drawing-pencils and water-colours before me. In a few seconds I produced a rough, but recognisable sketch of my beloved, and gave it to Mrs. White, who turned pale, and trembled so violently that she leaned against the table for support. She held the sketch for a moment with shaking hands and a look of terror; then dropped it with a loud cry—

“Lord have mercy upon us, sir! That’s my poor young mistress—master’s sister. And she died eighteen years ago!”

I could not believe it—I would not believe it. I laughed at her and at myself. I said the sketch was not a likeness, that her memory deceived her. In a breath I reasoned with, ridiculed, and reviled the terrified woman. I know not what absurdities of gesture and exclamation I was perpetrating when Mrs. White laid her shaking hand upon my arm.

“What I’ve told you is the simple truth, sir, as true as that I’m standing here! Come to my room, and I’ll prove it to you.”

I followed the housekeeper to her room, and on its threshold I stood transfixed. There, on the opposite wall, hung a life-size portrait, whose likeness was unmistakable—from the pensive curve of the red lips, the proud grace of the small head, the pearly paleness of the colourless cheeks, even to the ruby cross on the slender throat, and the shining folds of the white robe.

But right across that delicate face was a cruel mark, as though some sharp instrument had been violently thrust at it.

Mrs. White stood beside me, crying quietly.

“What is the meaning of that?” I asked her, pointing to the scar.

“My master did it in his anger, sir, and when I begged him to stop, he tore the picture from the wall, and bade me have it destroyed. But I could not do that. I brought it here, when I knew he would never see it again. It is rather heavy; can you lift it down, and look behind it?”

I did so. On the back was inscribed—“Adela Endsleigh De Morgue, born 18—,” and below, in a trembling woman’s hand, “Died December 186—.”

I set the portrait tenderly against the wall, then threw myself on the floor beside it. I was stupefied, miserable. Only one idea was clear to my bewildered brain. I must learn all I could about her. Her! Whom? A picture—a vision—a dead woman!

“Why did he want to destroy the picture?”

Mrs. White paused—hesitated. But my strange interest in the portrait overcame her scruples.

“Because—because she had disgraced his name, sir. They were orphans, and when he came into the property, he would have his sister home, without a governess or any one to look after her, though she was but a child. He worshipped her, and her whim was law. They were always together, riding and rowing, and skating and fishing. Whatever he did she would do; and he never seemed to care for any other companion—but one. There was a Captain Clifford who had been at College with my master, though he was much older; and one Christmas he came here to stay, and then there were three, for Miss Adela was with them just the same. I soon saw how it was, sir; but I’m sure my master never guessed, till one day her room was empty, and so was the captain’s. They had gone away in the night—together; and my master knew, and Miss Adela knew too, what I did not—that Captain Clifford was a married man.”

She stopped a moment, to steady her trembling voice.

“His sister was the only human being my master ever loved. But there was one thing he loved better—the good name of his house. And they were swept away from him at one blow. It well nigh turned his brain. He took a dreadful oath that neither Miss Adela nor anyone belonging to her should ever cross his doors again. And after that he never saw daylight, and never had a visitor. He lives entirely in his own rooms, with the windows blocked up, and he only goes out at night. It is an awful life, sir!”

I had risen, ashamed of my violent outbreak of feeling, and was replacing the poor, marred, lovely face, symbol of a ruined life, in its place in the wall.

“And she—Adela—was she ever heard of?”

“Oh, sir, that was the worst of all! She came back one bitter December night, four or five years after she ran away—she came back, sir, with scarcely clothes to cover her—and my master with his own hands put her out into the darkness and the snow.

“We servants would have followed and helped her, for we loved the very ground she trod on. But her brother went round the house from door to door and bolted and locked them all, and took the keys up into his own room. It was awful, sir! Well, three weeks after, by the last post on Christmas Eve—and a wretched Christmas it was for all of us—there came a black-edged letter for my master; I saw that Belton’s face was as white as ashes when he took it upstairs, and I lingered in the hall, feeling uneasy, when my master came downstairs in his dressing-gown with nothing on his head, and dashed out at the hall door into the storm, with the letter in his hand. We all stood horror-struck at first, and then Belton and I followed him; for we thought he’d

gone raving mad at last; and we saw him flying through the park, over the wet grass and brambles, never waiting for the path till he got to the Mausoleum. As we came up with him the door was locked in our faces, and there he stayed all night long. Belton was the only one that dared to sit up for him. When I saw him again he was as cool and sharp as ever, as if nothing had happened. My dear young lady’s name was never mentioned again in this house, but I know the letter was to say she was dead, and that cruel night had killed her. But I never heard,” added Mrs. White, in lowered tones of awe and terror, “that she came again. And why, sir, should she have come to you?”

I cannot describe the days that followed. They were a waking nightmare, haunted by one unnatural, incredible, intolerable idea. I, who had all my life ridiculed the theory of supernatural presences. I, to have seen and loved a phantom!

Yet as every evening came round I listened and longed for that strange presence which, if unearthly, was dearer to me than anything on earth. I knew that we should not meet again till that appointed meeting to which I had pledged my word. I knew I should go. I knew that the next, and perhaps the last, time I should see that strange and lovely vision would be at the Mausoleum in the park.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SECRET OF THE TOMB.

Christmas Eve arrived. To my part of that melancholy house the anniversary brought no change, except an added sense of gloom. The occasional opening of a distant door betrayed some festivity in the servants’ regions, though Mrs. White’s frightened face and Belton’s increased sternness showed that they took no part in it. My lonely dinner was a mere show, which I sat out impatiently. When at last in the drawing-room, I opened one of the windows that the icy night air might blow on my heated face, and stood watching the distant glimmer of that sepulchral light, visible from almost every window of the house. Hour by hour I watched it, unable to avert my eyes or my thoughts.

Then, as the cupids on the mantelpiece chimed half-past eleven with their silver bells, the light drew me like a magnet out of the silent house, across the wet and clinging grass, and up to the more silent dwelling of the dead. The door was ajar, and I entered with a beating heart, expecting I knew not what revelation of horror. But the mausoleum was empty, and my hurried step was the only sound that broke its echoes. In the centre was a richly-carved marble tomb, where the bodies of Mr. De Morgue’s father and mother rested, while their ancestors slept below. At its foot stood a large ebony cabinet, which supported an open funeral lamp. A larger lamp, pendant from the roof, gave the light I had so often watched.

I leaned against the side of the tomb, and waited—chilled, burning, awe-struck, incredulous—with every conflicting sensation rending mind and body. Twelve tolled from the great clock of the Priory, and the mausoleum door slowly opened. I started up, expecting to see her again; but it was Mr. De Morgue who entered, dressed as I had last seen him, and unprotected from the winter night. His white face had the fixed, unseeing expression of a sleep-walker, and his whole being seemed absorbed by one thought.

He stopped before the cabinet, unlocked it, and took out a large black-bordered packet; paused a moment, then held it over the lamp. But before the flame touched it, his hand dropped powerless by his side, as from behind the tomb glided the figure so well known to me—the white-robed girlish figure of her who had lain in the grave for eighteen years.

The old man shrank and cowered at its approach. “Adela!” he cried, wildly, “forgive me—leave me; I will not destroy it. I will acknowledge your child.” His voice died away in a choking sob, and he fell senseless on the ground.

As the old man fell, a woman swiftly passed me, with pale, resolute face and gleaming eyes—not to lift the grey head or summon help for the dying, only to snatch the letter from the loosening clasp of the cold fingers, and cry, with a low laugh of bitter triumph, “I have found it at last!”

I regret to say that I did not marry the heiress of Netherstowe, as, after so romantic an introduction to her, I ought to have done. She had all the pride of the De Morgues—perhaps a double allowance, because of the wrongs of her youth. She married a rich baronet, whose name I will not mention, lest you should stare too hard at her ladyship’s victoria when next you see it in the Row.

The supernatural part of the matter had been easily managed. When Adela was turned away from her brother’s door that night, she went to a little farm belonging to Belton’s mother, and died there, leaving her infant daughter in the woman’s care. On her death-bed she told Belton that she had been married to Mr. Clifford in India after his first wife’s death. He left the army soon after the elopement and went in search of some small Indian appointment which he failed to obtain. Their child was Mr. De Morgue’s legal heir. This was the news contained in the black-edged letter, together with the certificates of marriage and baptism. But Mr. De Morgue did not consider that his sister’s shame had been blotted out, and in his unsettled brain he resolved to keep his oath. So the younger Adela was brought up by the Beltons, who sent her to school in a distant town. When she learnt her history she determined somehow to obtain possession of the documents, without which she would not have had a title of evidence in support of her claim. The scheme was all her own, and Belton, who kept the keys of the rooms, did not hesitate to give her the clothes and ornaments her mother had left behind in her flight. The conspirators had been baffled in effort after effort to obtain the papers. Miss Clifford’s interviews with me were to try to obtain some clue to their hiding-place, which Belton himself did not know. The scene at the mausoleum was planned to work on her uncle’s feelings. She knew he had visited it every Christmas Eve since his sister’s death. Why she had drawn me thither I hardly know—perhaps she feared violence, and thought she might need help.

I don’t suppose she ever contemplated the fatal result of her plot—but I am sure she did not regret it.

I left Netherstowe on Christmas Day, and have never seen nor wished to see it since. A very handsome cheque was sent me for the time I had wasted over that family history, which never went to press, and I was fool enough to light my cigar with it. But I am unchanged in my conviction that my forte is Family History, and I am open to any handsome offer to try my hand again.

A FACT FUNNIER THAN FICTION.

A GERMAN lady who is engaged in teaching her mother tongue to the daughters of the Upper Ten of a suburban neighbourhood was recently visited by a very wealthy and possibly very worthy matron, whose education was evidently not as extensive as her property. She greatly admired the various works of art in the governess’s rooms, but particularly one statuette, an Apollo Belvedere. “Lovely,” exclaimed the matron, “what is the subject?” Somewhat surprised, the Teutonic instructress informed her that it was a statue of Apollo. “Oh, of course,” was the reply, “Apollo; yes, to be sure, let me see—Apollo—he was a celebrated German gentleman, was he not?”

JEANNE LA TRICOTEUSE.

IN THREE PARTS.

BY B. MONTGOMERIE RANKING.

PART I.

“AND you will love me always, Monsieur Louis?”

“Till death, my sweet! And even if I die before you, our eyes will meet, and I shall close mine with a last thought of your face and your white hands, those long white fingers of yours which first caught my sight as you knitted at your cottage door.”

“But you leave me—and our child? Must it be born with no father’s blessing?”

“Fear nothing, Jeanne! I return shortly; and for our child—if it be a son, not a noble in France shall hold his head higher than my boy; if it be a girl—well, many men will toil for the hand of the Seigneur de Couvray’s daughter, though she be the child of love. Adieu, now, love! Knit my life into thy life as thou knittest, and look for our next meeting.”

Brightly shone the summer moon, the moon of pleasant Auvergne, as they kissed and parted beneath the apple-trees, the young Seigneur Louis de Couvray and his love. They called her Jeanne la Tricoteuse in the village, for her white, shapely fingers were ever busy with the knitting-needles as she went hither and thither; perhaps she knew what hands she had, and loved to show them; perhaps it was only habit—who shall tell the inner-workings of a young girl’s heart! But those white hands, and the calm, pale face of the knitter, had stolen away the heart of the Seigneur de Couvray as he rode one evening from the boar-hunt; he rested awhile at her cottage door, and drinking the milk which she brought him in homage, drank still deeper at her eyes. After that he came often; at first carelessly, by daylight; then, as his passion grew, furtively, and under the stars. Now it was hard on a year since they first met, and their secret love must sever, for Louis de Couvray was called to the Court, and Jeanne must think of her unborn child and weep.

But he,—he spoke her fair, and as he kissed away her tears his heart said for a moment, “Ah, if Jeanne could be lady of Couvray!” But his head was stronger than his heart, and told him that a lord may not wed with a peasant girl. So they parted, with tears and vows, and the sweet moon of Auvergne shone white upon Jeanne’s white face as she leaned once again beside her cottage door, and knitted, hardly knowing what she did.

PART II.

A street in gay Paris. A crowd outside the door of a small cabaret, from the open door of which come fumes of wine and rancid lamp-oil, and the screams and the singing and the laughter of a tipsy multitude; for this is the “Lapin Blanc,” and it is a night of revelry. But outside in the mud, under the glimmer of the lamp, who is that tall, awful woman with the white face, who raises her arm to Heaven and curses mankind in her drunken fury, with words that make the angels hide their faces for tears?

“Drunk! Yes, I am drunk! Drunk and mad! for she is dead to-day, my little Louise. Dead, do you understand, good people? Ah, yes, very likely I am what you say! If you had had a little child, a dear little child, look you, with blue eyes and cheeks like the apple blossoms, would you not have done as I did, rather than it should die? And yet she is dead, you see, and her father will never see her—her father! And he left me, left me when the apples were in bloom, and she was born, and he brought the tall, scornful woman home before the fruit was ripe. Room for my misery, good people! Room for the Queen of Despair!”

So they parted to right and to left, with that pity which ever seems to dwell in humble minds when sorrow is present, and with something of that awe which attends the presence of a sublime horror, and Jeanne passed out into the darkness—alas! for her love and her sin!—and as she went, steady through her agony, the lamp glimmered feebly over her pale face and burning eyes, and her thin long fingers wrung and worked together as if she knitted some unseen web.

PART III.

Ab, ça ira, ça ira, ça ira,
Les aristocrates à la lanterne!

And as the mad crowd swung round and round in their frenzied dance, the hideous chant swelled louder and louder round the red guillotine. For the day of vengeance had come, and innocent and guilty must suffer alike because of the crimes of a few. The day was bright and sunny, and far away in fair French meadows the grass was full of buttercups, and the rivers ran pleasantly between the banks, fresh with willow-weed and tender with forget-me-not, and all the apple orchards were red with promise of fruit. But here, in hot Paris, there was no thought of spring; it was the winter of love and hope, and loyalty; only Death rejoiced, for it was his harvest time, and a trusty reaper was La Sainte Guillotine.

Among the crowd there sat certain women, unmoved by the tumult around them; women, some young, some old, but all with hard set faces, who took no count of song or dance, but sat still, sometimes glancing up at the deadly knife that was robbing earth of so much that was fair and good, and—knitted. Knitted on, whilst the creak of the tumbrils told of more victims brought to the shambles; knitted silently, as the roar of the mob proclaimed another offering at the devil’s altar; still knitted, unmoved, till the sinking sun brought a little respite to the mad city as he fled blushing from the sight of earth.

This day you might have seen a new knitter sitting amidst the others, younger than her companions, and deft with her fingers. A woman, still beautiful, with a wild, lost look, whose long white fingers plied the needles as if from habit rather than from choice; for she seemed scarcely to see her work. They had brought her there, some of them; she cared nothing where she went now, so they brought out Jeanne la Folle to swell their army, and she sat and knitted as hardly knowing what she did.

A cry—a terrible cry from amongst the knitters: “Louis! Louis! Ah, my old love!”

For there was a pale-faced man upon the scaffold, with long brown hair, who was bowing to the mob with a scorn that drove the many-headed beast to a frenzy of idiotic denunciation. Idiotic—for how could he care now what they thought of him! And amongst the knitters there was a wan, white-faced woman, who stretched wild arms towards the guillotine, and fell.

Then the others around her—being still women in spite of themselves—ran and raised her pitifully and furiously, and some said this thing and some said that—and the knife fell, as the yell of the mob proclaimed the death of another aristocrat.

“But,” said they, “she has fainted; the sun was hot, it is true.”

“Fainted!”—Dead!—The lives of two whilom lovers were indeed knitted into one, and as their eyes met at last the thread was severed.





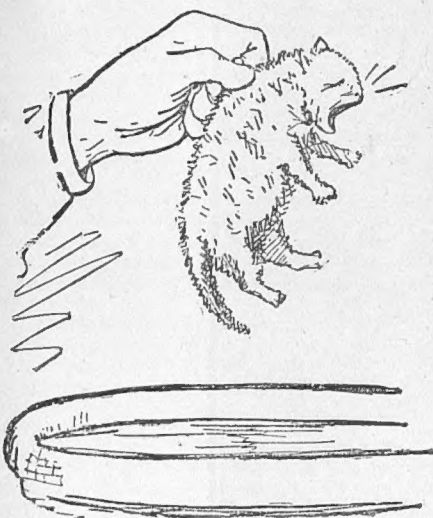
THE RIVALS.

BY G. A. HOLMES (Painter of "Can't you Talk").

NOBODY'S CAT.

A MORAL TALE.

BY OUR CAPTIOUS CRITIC



THE hero of this story—if such a being can be termed a hero—was one of those red kittens that people generally pounce upon for drowning purposes. He had, however, escaped the usual fate of his complexion, and arrived at the stage of life when he might be described as “a big Tom.” His family history is not sufficiently reputable, or, indeed, interesting, from a moral point of view to be detailed here; so that the history of the ginger-coloured cat will only deal with the passage in his history when he promiscuously turned up in a series of little back gardens attached to a series of little buildings (audaciously termed “villas”) in a murky suburb of London. Indeed, Ramsthicket is one of the most miserable edges to the great city that I know of. In the most jubilant months of summer Ramsthicket is covered with the rotting leaves of the preceding autumn, or perhaps autumns, for it is scarcely possible to imagine the sickly trees around the place capable of shedding such a quantity of leaves in one season. Here it was that Ginger (we will know him by the name of Ginger for the sake of identification), here it was that Ginger acted as a marauder and general terror to the right-minded cats of the various houses composing the row known as Aphrodite Villas. Ginger was avoided by most of the feline inhabitants of those parts—in fact, by all but one, and she, poor, silly little thing, not only knew but loved him, a piece of indiscretion on her part that caused her untimely death, and supplied the thread of this moral tale. This innocent little cat, the favourite of an innocent little lady living at the extreme end of Aphrodite Villas (the one end opened out upon the main road, the other lost itself in a brick-field); this innocent little cat's name was Jenny. Jenny had but the narrowest experience of life, and only knew in a general way that everything beyond the garden-wall of her home was a black and terrible world, unfit for discovery. Nevertheless, when Ginger came striding along



Ginger and the Musician.

the wall at the end of the little garden, gingerly (I beg your pardon!) but gracefully picking his way amongst the cunningly arranged pieces of broken bottle and other glass ware, she thought him exceedingly handsome. When he stood still and gazed at her, and then winked, she fairly lost her heart, and felt that burning love for Ginger, which is only cooled by marriage or

damages in an action for breach of promise. Ginger made her acquaintance, and very soon discovered the power his fascinations had over her. He was not above making use of this influence, and went so far, I believe, when she refused to fly with him to other climbs than the walls of Aphrodite Villas, that she should make an arrangement by which he might be enabled to visit her in, say the pantry, after the family had retired to rest, and when he could unmolested unburden his heart (and, perhaps, overburden his stomach). Jenny, I am sorry to say, though strictly virtuous, was more indiscreet than young ladies should be under such circumstances, but then Jenny was very young, and had no guiding parent to tell her of her improprieties. She only knew that her duty was towards her mistress (hence her refusal to fly with Ginger), and that her affection was towards the warm-coated cat that came to visit her frequently. About the centre of Aphrodite Villas dwelt a musician, who, in the sitting-room that looked into the garden, spent most of his time scraping at a violin. He called it “composing.” Ginger, of necessity, had to pass along the wall of this musician's garden, and frequently heard him scraping away, and as frequently interrupted him by a vocal accompaniment. Ginger had gained the knowledge somewhere or other that the strings of this instrument upon which the musician performed were made of catgut, and his bowels were moved for the fate of his fellow cats, who had fallen victims to the cause of music. Constant application generally produces an answer of some sort, and it so happened that the musician, after a few weeks of mockery from Ginger, came to the conclusion that Ginger was an intolerable nuisance. He applied to his neighbours right and left to know if it was their cat, and if so, would they kindly keep it at home or kill it, or use some other means of saving him the daily agony of being disturbed? The invariable answer was that they knew the cat, and were much

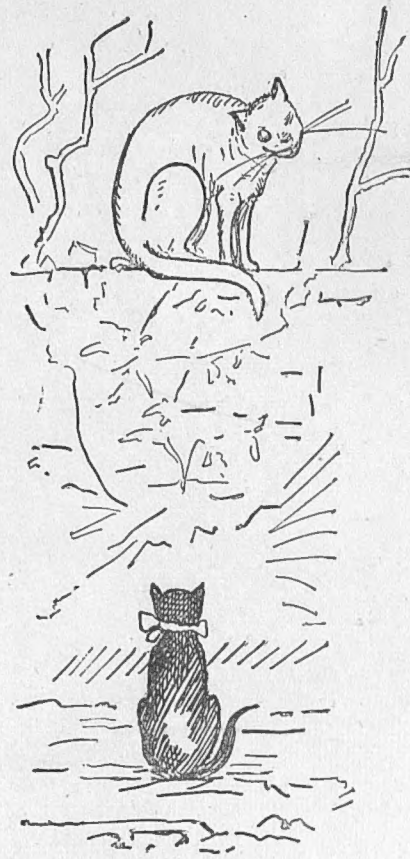


The Musician and Ginger.

troubled by it, but it was nobody's cat, and of course nobody was responsible for its actions. Finding that it was nobody's cat, and that its mockery continued, the musician made up his mind to destroy it; to have its life, or lives, if need be. For this purpose he procured a very neat little air-pistol. It made a deep hole in a board set up at the other end of the garden for practice, over which he wasted many precious hours. After this his mood towards Ginger underwent an alteration. The cat that he had so often wished at—Jericho, or anywhere beyond his hearing, he now had a burning desire to see and hear. He sat with the window open, waiting anxiously, now burnt with the fever of expectation, now chilled with the raw, foggy air of Ramsthicket. Ginger soon satisfied him by turning up and howling in his most discordant key.

The musician, with deadly aim, deprived Ginger of one of his lives. Any legitimate story-writer in dealing with this moral tale would now proceed to detail how when Ginger lost a life he fell back upon the proverbial quantity allowed to cats, how he came up smiling (and howling) next morning, and lost another life to the musician; how next morning he “went another on it,” thus reducing his existence to six lives all told. I, however, am not anxious to dwell upon the horror of an enraged musician or the immoral conduct of a cat who will persistently worry humanity even at the expense of portions of his own existence. He continued his attentions to Jenny, who saw with anxiety the fact that he was becoming attenuated. He related the story of his enemy, the musician. Of course, poor little confiding soul, she hung upon his words and considered that his every action must be right. Still, as days went on and her cavalier turned up always short of a life that he had enjoyed the day before, she began to be seriously alarmed. At last he crawled up one

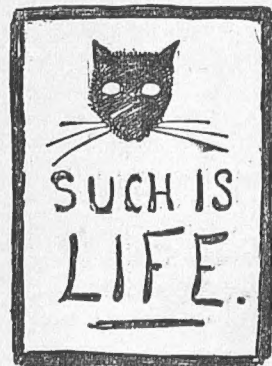
night sorely wounded, and the last of his nine lives quickly ebbing from him. It nearly burst her poor little heart to see all that was noble, brave, and handsome dying before her eyes. What was life to her without her Ginger? He had one request to make of her. What was it? The loving Jenny bent her ear to hear it. In a suppressed voice Ginger asked her as she loved him to give him one life of hers! Oh, joy! poor Jenny offered up one of her lives immediately. What pleasure to see his form revive with the life she gave him! * She might be weaker, but then she had eight more lives, any of which she would gladly give to him. She told him so, and he in the most unselfish manner thought it would be well to have another; and, so to speak, he “starred two” just in time, for his own worthless existence had just gone out. Great was the joy of the musician when he thought how, after his fortnight's shooting, he had at last exterminated the hateful brute that so persistently worried him; he had nine times mortally wounded it, and saw it but yesterday crawl off to die. Thus he ruminated the morning following Ginger's ninth quietus, as he sat screwing up



Ginger fascinating Jenny.

his fiddle for the study of his beloved art, the sweet strains of which would no longer be disturbed by inharmonious caterwaulings. Greater than his joy, however, was his surprise when his ear caught the hateful sound, longer and louder in its triumphant yell than he had ever known it before. Looking out he saw there again the same Ginger cat glaring defiance at him! This was too much for even a soft-hearted musician. Discarding the usual air-pistol, and reckless as to the opinions of his neighbours, he took down an old blunderbuss, which he held amongst other trifles of curiosity. Loading it to brim with “sawdust” gunpowder, he banged at Ginger, knocking him clean off the wall, and breaking several windows with the vibration of the report. Ginger crawled back to his faithful Jenny with but a remnant of the life she had lent him. She hastened to sacrifice herself still further. “Would he take them all? Happy she to die for his smallest wish.” He contented himself with “starring” three more, leaving the poor little soul four to love him with. So great had his vindictiveness become towards the musician that he could not resist annoying him still, thus as he recklessly lost the three lives given him so freely, he basely thought to himself, “She can give me more.” At last the day arrived when Ginger took the eighth life from the loving Jenny, leaving her cruelly with her last hold on life. These he squandered to the last, with a bad thought in his black heart; crawling to the garden, where Jenny waited faithfully for him, he said, “Farewell, farewell, at last I die.” “Not so,” said Jenny in agony, “I will die for you; take, oh! take my last life, for I love you!” He *did* take it, and poor little Jenny curled up and died a martyr on the altar of affection. Next morning off he went, but do you think he passed the musician's window? Not he, he made tracks in exactly the opposite direction, with the sole object of finding another innocent but eligible silly kitten for a sweetheart.

MORAL.



* It is not generally known that animal magnetism is so highly developed in cats that they have the power of imparting vitality one to another. I have not room here to give the scientific explanation of it, but the reader had better accept the fact.

A MEMORABLE BREAKFAST.

RAMBLING in what have been called the “Byways of History,” we meet with many a stirring record in which the artist and novelist may find admirable subject matter for canvas or story. And thinking of these in connection with Christmas-time, one cannot help remembering how long they were preserved in fire-side Christmas stories which old men and women heard as children at their parents’ knees, and told to their own sons and daughters and grand-children. Amongst stories of this kind a prominent one in Thuringia is that of this “Memorable Breakfast,” painted by our artist, and reproduced on wood as one of the pictorial ingredients of the LOVING CUP which, in the genial old story-telling spirit of the season, we this year circulate amongst our readers.

Turning over an ancient chronicle of the sixteenth century, under the title of “Res in Ecclesia et politica Christiana gesta ab anno 1500, ad ann. 1600, autore J. Söfing, theolog. doct. Rudolst, 1676,” we found the following anecdote.

A German lady, descendant of a family long renowned for valiant feats of arms, and which had already given an emperor to Germany, on a particular occasion made the formidable Duke of Alva tremble by her bold and resolute conduct. As the Emperor Charles V., on his return, in the year 1547, from the Battle of Muhlberg, to his camp in Nubia, passed through Thuringia, Catharina, Countess Dowager of Schwartzburg, born princess of Henneberg, obtained of him a letter of safeguard that her subjects might have nothing to suffer from the Spanish army on its march through her territories; in return for which she bound herself to allow the Spanish troops that were transported to Rudolstadt, on the Saalbrücke, to supply themselves with bread, beer, and other provisions at a reasonable price, in that place. At

which place at the same time she prudently had the bridge standing close to the tower demolished in all haste and reconstructed over the river at a considerable distance, that the too great proximity of the city might be no temptation to her rapacious and unscrupulous guests, for in those days the march of a Spanish army was a track of horror and desolation, and even on friendly territory it was difficult to control the savage and thievish instincts of its troops. The inhabitants, too, of all the places through which the army was to pass were informed that they might send the chief of their valuables to the Castle of Rudolstadt.

Meantime, the Spanish General, attended by Prince Henry of Brunswick and his sons, approached the city, and invited themselves, by a messenger whom they despatched before, to take their morning’s repast with the Countess of Schwartzburg. So modest a request, made at the head of an army, was not to be rejected. The answer returned was that they should be kindly supplied with what the house afforded; that His Excellency might come, and be assured of a welcome reception. However, she did not neglect, at the same time, to remind the Spanish General of the safeguard, and to urge home to him the conscientious observance of it.

A friendly reception and a well-furnished table welcomed the arrival of the duke at the Castle. He was obliged to confess that the Thuringian ladies had an excellent notion of cookery, and did honour to the laws of hospitality. But scarcely had they taken their seats when a messenger, out of breath, called the countess from the hall. His tidings informed her that the Spanish soldiers had used violence in some villages on the way, and had driven off the cattle belonging to the peasants. Catharina was a true mother to her people; whatever the poorest of her subjects unjustly suffered, wounded her to the very quick. Full of indignation at this breach of faith, yet not forsaken of her presence of mind, she ordered her whole retinue to arm themselves immediately in private, and to

bolt and bar all the gates of the castle; which done, she returned to the hall, and rejoined the princes, who were still at the table. Here she complained to them in the most moving terms of the usage she had met with, and how badly the imperial word was kept. They told her, laughing, that this was the custom in war, and that such trifling disorders of soldiers in marching through a place were not to be minded.

“That we shall presently see,” replied she, stoutly. “My poor subjects must have their own again, or by God!”—raising her voice in a threatening tone—“Princes’ blood for oxen’s blood!” With this emphatic declaration, she quitted the room, returning, in a few minutes, with armed men, who, sword in hand, yet with great reverence, planted themselves behind the chairs of the princes, and took the waiters’ places. On the entrance of these fierce-looking fellows, Duke Alva directly changed colour; and they all gazed at one another in silence and affright. Cut off from the army, surrounded by a resolute body of men, what had they to do but to summon up their patience and to appease the offended lady on the best terms they could. Henry of Brunswick was the first that collected his spirits, and smothered his feelings by bursting into a loud fit of laughter, and turning all that had passed into a subject of mirth, concluding with a pompous panegyric on the patriotic concern and the determined intrepidity she had shown. He entreated her to make herself easy, and took it upon himself to bring the Duke of Alva to consent to whatever should be found reasonable, which he immediately effected by inducing the latter to despatch on the spot an order to the army to restore the cattle without delay to the persons from whom they had been stolen. On the return of the courier with the certificate that all damages were made good, the Countess of Schwartzburg politely thanked her guests for the honour they had done her castle; and they, in return, very courteously took their leave.

She died, universally honoured and lamented, in the 58th year of her age and the 29th of her reign. The church of Rudolstadt is in possession of her bones.

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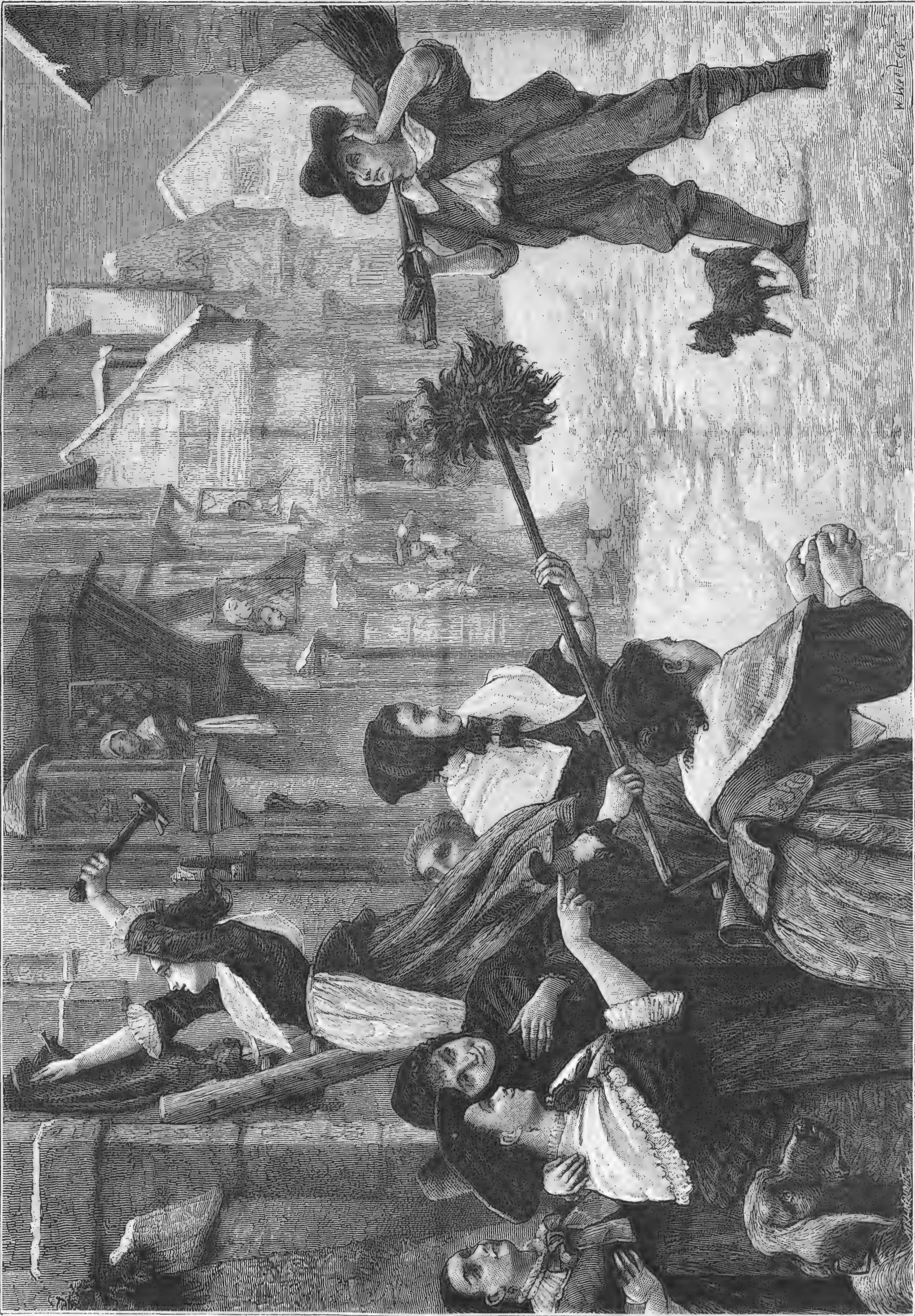
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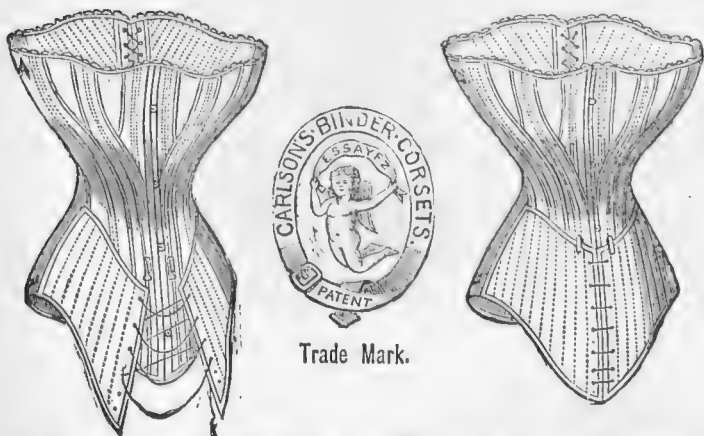
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From E. A. Wright, miller, &c., Leven, Beverley, Yorkshire, Oct. 26, 1878.

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"You are at liberty to use this in any way you wish, and at the same time I shall be glad to answer any inquiries any one may make in regard to my case, &c.—Yours respectfully, "E. A. WRIGHT."

TESTIMONIAL from "English Mechanic and World of Science" of August 16, 1878.

"Rash.—From your query I should imagine your friend suffers from 'Chronic eczema.' This I have had occasionally for some years, and have had the best of advice, but apparently of no value, as the rash seems, under medical treatment, to remain just as it was. I have, however, obtained considerable relief from taking 'Clarke's Blood Mixture,' and although I never care to recommend patent medicines, yet this one appears to merit a recommendation. Try it.

"W. J. LANCASTER."

TESTIMONIAL.

"Gulgong, New South Wales, May 25, 1878.

"Sir,—I was very badly attacked with a skin disease called in this colony 'Prickly Heat,' and was recommended to try your 'Blood Mixture.' I purchased one bottle, and it effected a perfect cure. I have recommended it to many persons afflicted with the same complaint with similar results. If you think this testimonial likely to be of service to you, make use of it in what way you please.

"I am, Sir, yours truly, "G. E. SHETTLER."

"To Mr. F. J. Clarke.

IMPORTANT TESTIMONIAL.

"Alexandria, Egypt, 22nd October, 1875.

"Sir,—Being a great sufferer from that complaint called 'Prickly Heat,' by the Arabs 'Ifamoneil,' I was induced by a friend to try your Blood Mixture. After using three bottles, I am happy to say that I have been quite relieved of all pain, and have not been troubled again with it.

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"Trusting that this may become better known ere long amongst those who, like myself, have to seek health in Egypt.

I remain, yours truly, "To F. J. Clarke. "J. M. MARSDALE."

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ELECTRO PLATE.

ASH'S KAFFEE-KANNE

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It will be found soothing to the most irritable skin, while its cleanliness and portability recommend it to gentlemen when travelling, hunting, shooting, yachting, &c. It is not affected by climate.

Sold by all Chemists and Perfumers, in Tubes, price 1s. 6d. and 3s.; and by the

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CAUTION.—Gentlemen are requested to observe the words "Prepared by his Widow" in raised letters on the top of each metallic tube of the Genuine Euxesis, as well as in Red Ink across labels.

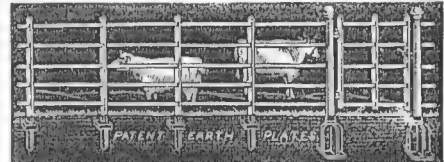
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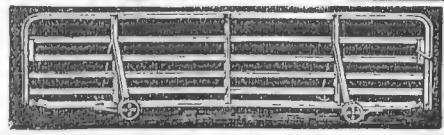
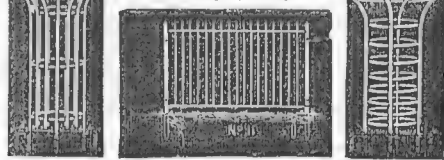
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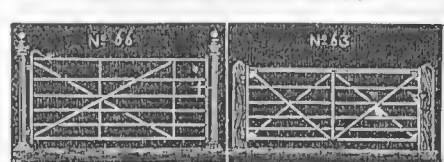
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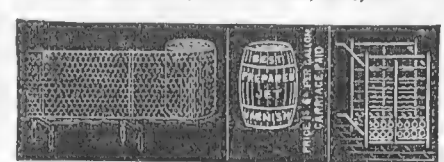
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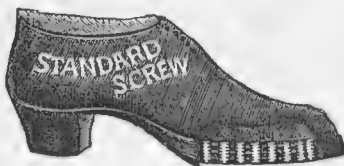
And see that they are stamped on the Soles

WARRANTED STANDARD SCREW.

Remember that the

STANDARD SCREWED BOOTS & SHOES

Are different from all others.



The fastening being turned or screwed into the sole, as shown above, thus drawing the outer sole, upper, and inner sole close together, and holding them so they cannot get apart.

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The Standard Screw is the only absolute fastening for boots and shoes.

The Standard Screwed Boots are perfectly watertight.

ASK FOR THE

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SOLD BY ALL BOOT AND SHOE DEALERS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED KINGDOM.

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FOR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN'S BOOTS AND SHOES.

These Springs give ease to the foot and elasticity to the boot.

Goodyear's Patent Steel Springs effectually prevent corns and bunions.

See that your boots have "Goodyear's Patent Steel Springs" stamped on the sole.

TESTIMONIAL.

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"Gentlemen,—Having used the GOODYEAR PATENT STEEL SPRINGS for more than two years I strongly recommend them to all my patients. I give a pair to each one of them, advising them to wear the same, as they give ease to the foot and elasticity to the boot, causing the boot to conform more to the shape of the foot, thereby preventing bunions and corns.—Yours truly,

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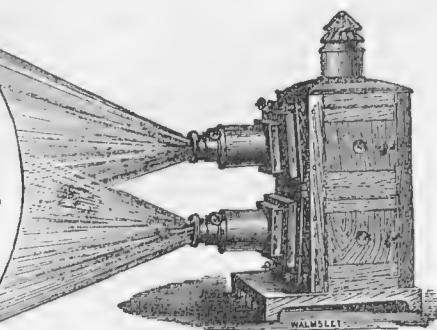
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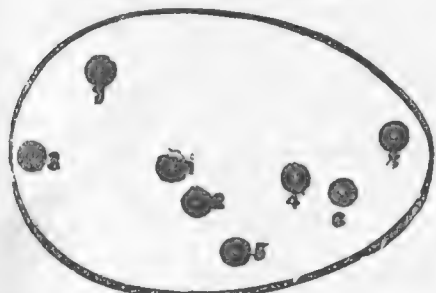


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100 Shots may be Fired without Cleaning Barrel.
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 Rifles exchanged if not approved of.



Scale 1/2 inch to the inch.

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 Orders for Rifles must be accompanied by a remittance.

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KEROSENE and Other Oils of the Finest Quality.
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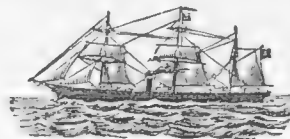
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GREATLY SUPERIOR TO ANY OTHER TOOTH-POWDER gives the teeth a pearl-like whiteness, and protects the enamel from decay.
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The Medical Profession over Forty Years have approved of this pure solution as the best remedy for **ACIDITY of the STOMACH, HEART-BURN, HEADACHE, GOUT, and INDIGESTION,** and as the safest Aperient for Delicate Constitutions, Ladies, Children and Infants.

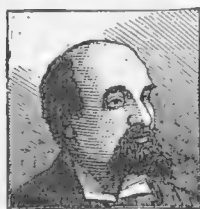
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ARRESTS DECAY in the TEETH and Sweetens the Breath.
 55, Bold Street, Liverpool; and at 39, Deansgate, Manchester.

Sold in 1s. 6d., 2s. 6d., 4s. 6d., and 8s. 6d. bottles, by all Chemists.

BALDNESS IS CURABLE.



"EAU MALLERON."
 A CURE IS GUARANTEED IN FROM THREE TO SIX MONTHS.

MONSIEUR LODOIS respectfully solicits all those who are bald, but desire to renew the natural covering of the head, to consult him any day between eleven and five o'clock, at the Rooms of the French Hygienic Society, 40, Haymarket, S.W.

Mr. LODOIS is so certain of success that he will enter into a contract on the principle of

NO CURE NO PAY.
 Pamphlets forwarded, post free, on application, THE FRENCH HYGIENIC SOCIETY, 40, HAYMARKET, LONDON, S.W.

THE GREAT ENGLISH REMEDY FOR GOUT AND RHEUMATISM.

All sufferers from the above complaints, either of recent or long standing, are advised to use

BLAIR'S GOUT AND RHEUMATIC PILLS.
 They require no restraint of diet or confinement during their use, and are certain to prevent the disease attacking any vital part.

Sold by all Chemists, at 1s. 1 1/2d. and 2s. 9d. per box.

TO FARMERS.

DAY, SON, & HEWITT'S STOCKBREEDERS' MEDICINE CHEST

For all Disorders in
HORSES, CATTLE, CALVES, SHEEP AND LAMBS,

and particularly recommended for
COWS CALVING AND EWES LAMBING,

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SCOUR OR DIARRHOEA IN LAMBS AND CALVES;

Also for COLIC in HORSES, and all cases of DEBILITY in STOCK.

Price Complete, with Shilling Key to Farriery, £2 10s. 6d.
 Horsekeepers' Chest, £2 17s. 6d.
 Carriage paid.

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KINAHAN'S LL WHISKY.

THE CREAM OF OLD IRISH WHISKIES.

Pure, mild, mellow, delicious and most wholesome. Universally recommended by the Medical Profession. Dr. HASSALL says:—"The Whisky is soft, mellow and pure, well matured, and of very excellent quality."

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A SLIGHT ADDITION OF THE EXTRACT GIVES GREAT STRENGTH AND FLAVOUR TO SOUPS, MADE DISHES, AND SAUCES, AND EFFECTS GREAT ECONOMY.

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Sold by all Stationers throughout the world.

OLDRIDGE'S BALM of COLUMBIA.

Established 60 years.

Is unrivalled in producing a luxuriant growth of Hair, Whiskers, and Moustachios, and the only remedy for Baldness, containing the essential requisites for cleansing and beautifying. 3s. 6d., 6s., and 11s. per bottle.

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ROWLAND'S MACASSAR OIL

Prevents the Hair falling off or turning grey. 3s. 6d., 7s., and 10s. 6d., equal to four small bottles.

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Whitens the Teeth, and prevents and arrests decay. 2s. 9d. per box. Ask any chemist, perfumer or hair-dresser for Rowland's articles, and avoid cheap imitations.

FURNITURE, &c., Delivered Carriage

Free. Illustrated price lists of Furniture, Bedsteads, and Bedding Upholstery, &c., gratis per post. The largest stock of Furnishing Requisites in London to select from, suitable for completely furnishing any class of house and at prices never before offered. Good Brussels Carpets 2s. 4 1/2d., 2s. 9d. and 3s. 3d., worth 4s. 1 1/2d., and newest and most elegant designs and best quality 3s. 1 1/2d. All goods warranted. Wm. Waine's wholesale, export, and complete House Furnishing Warehouses, 131, to 139, Newington Butts. Factories, Crampton-street, and Frederick-place, London.

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SYRIAN, by Mentmore out of Princess, at 25 guineas and 1 sov the groom.

Winners and dams of winners of 200 sovs in one stake, half price.

Apply to Edward C. Munby, Esq., Estates Office, Myton, Helperby, York.

At Beenharn House, Reading Railway Station and Telegrams, Aldermaston.

KING OF THE FOREST, at 30gs.

CYMBAL, at 25gs.

The above stallions limited to thirty mares each.

Apply to Thos. Cartwright.

At Moldrop Stud Farm, Richmond, Yorkshire.

KING LUD will serve a limited number of Mares at 30gs. each.

All expenses paid before the mares are removed.

Apply J. Trowsdale, as above.

HORSES.—Taylor's Condition Balls.

The Field.—"Try Taylor's Condition Balls."

Bell's Life.—"They possess extraordinary merit."

York Herald.—"An invaluable preparation."

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John Scott.—"They are invaluable."

John Osborne.—"They are unequalled."

Samuel Rodgers.—"Send me Six dozen packets."

Thomas Dawson.—"Send me a good supply."

N.B.—The same ingredients in the form of Powders.

Balls, 3s.; Powders, 2s. 6d.

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Cough or Influenza.—A cure guaranteed in ten days.

All Chemists, in Boxes, 2s. 6d., with full directions.

SHEEP.—Taylor's Foot Rot Dressings.

—For Foot Rot in Sheep, and Foul or Hail in the Feet of Cattle it has no equal.

Bottles, 1s., 2s., and 3s. 6d. each.

Prepared by THOS. TAYLOR, M.R.C.V.S., Derby.

Sold by all Chemists.

EPPS'S

COCOA.

GRATEFUL

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COMFORTING.

JAMES EPPS AND CO.,

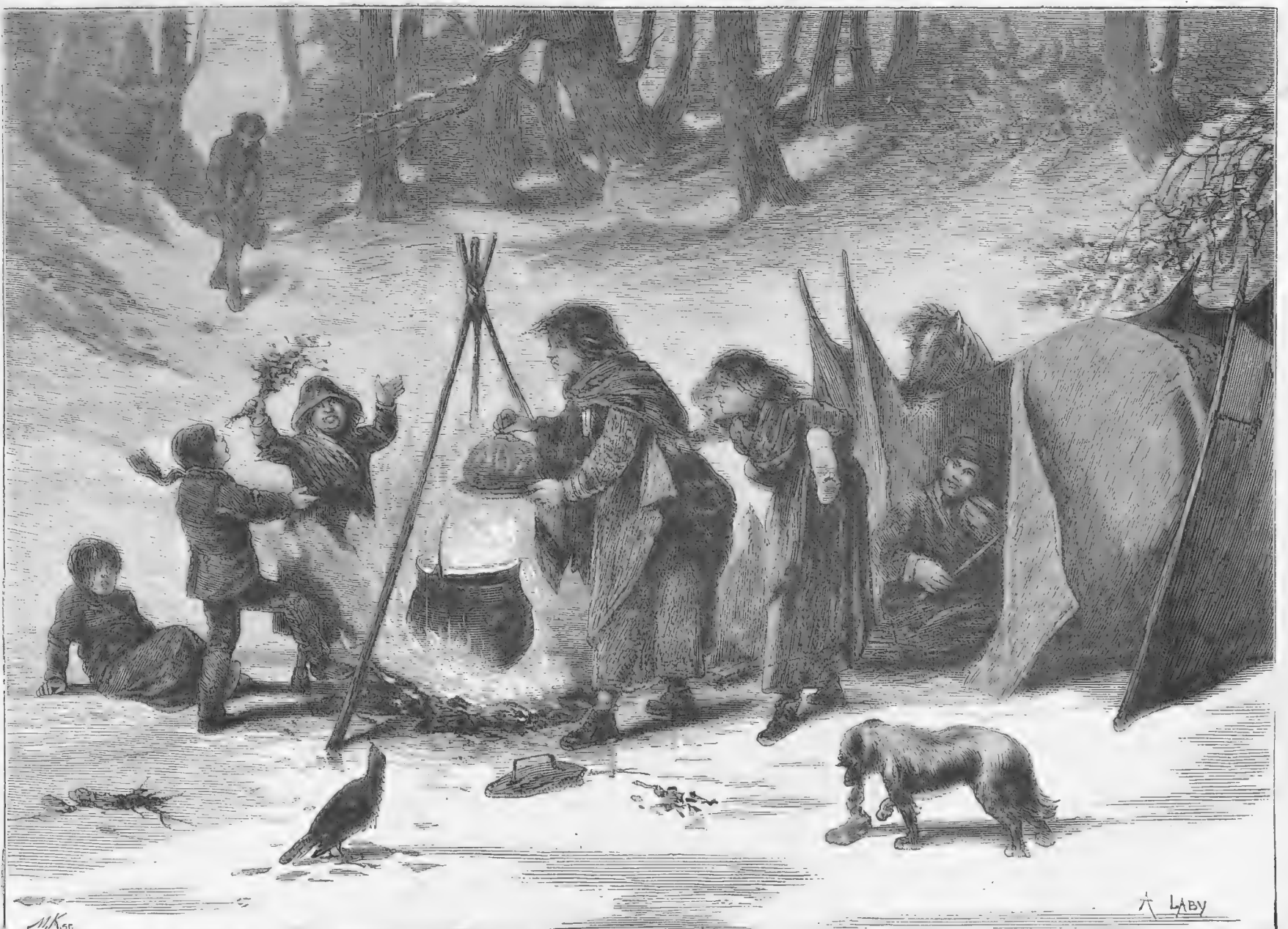
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CHEMISTS.

CHIEF COUNTING HOUSE IN
EUROPE: 39, Foster Lane, London, E.C., and
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UNDER THE MISTLETOE—CORSELETS AND KISSES.—(See "*Frighted with False Fire*.")



CHRISTMAS UNDER A HEDGE.—(See "*The Stroller's Story*.")

THE MAGIC HANDKERCHIEF.

—"There's magick in the web of it."—*Othello*.

A BORDER BALLAD.

BY JOSEPH MACKAY.

HUGH OF SCOWRY donned his cloak
And stepped towards the door,
But Maude she clung about his neck,
And thus besought him sore :

"Now though you love that dark woman,
And love no longer me,
Yet might ye bide for this one night
With the old true love," sighed she.

"Sweet," answered he, "I cannot see
Why this thing must be true,
That if I love a dark woman
I love no longer you."

"But sit," she said, "and the right reason
Shortly I will declare."
His arms were folded in his cloak;
She stood behind the chair.

She bended down to kiss his brow,
Said, "If you feel a tear,
Remember I am the true, true love
You have loved this many a year.

"Oh if I cry, remember I
Am but your little Maude,
Who always loved you more than Heaven,
And better than her God."

"Yet, sweet," said he, "I cannot see
By any reasoning how
That if I love a dark woman
I must no more love you."

"Peace, peace," she said; "things that are dead
Strive not to say they live;
'Tis your heart's love you've ta'en from me
That now to her you give.

"And if you love her night-black locks
My brown hair's nought to you,
And if you love her darksome eyes
You cannot love my blue.

"And if you love her dusky face
You cannot love my pale,
And if you love her haughty words
My loving words must fail.

"If at her feet you love to sit,
The slave of her soft hours,
You can no more delight in me,
Who still must crouch at yours.

"If your love lives in her large arms
That is so grand and tall,
Cold scorn is for the little arms
Of me so mean and small."

Said Hugh, "You reason like a clerk,
But faith, you reason wrong."
"Alack!" quo' she, "I know when hearts
Are broken that were strong!"

"But little Maude, what rare perfume,"
Said he, "is blown abroad?"
"It is a scented handkerchief
I bought i' the fair," said Maude.

"Then let it lie upon my face,
For by the Lord," quoth he,
"Tis sweeter than any spice that comes
From the banks of Araby."

And Maude she laid it on his brow,
Weeping salt tears above;
A witch gave her that handkerchief
To win her back his love;

Had told her how that it was charmed
With spells no man could break,
And tall Hugh would be hers for aye,
Once it was round his neck.

Oh, so full Maude's doubting heart
Thumped loudly in her side,
As round his throat that handkerchief
With trembling hands she tied.

And drowsy, drowsy, Hugh did grow,
Dreamful grew his eyes,
And thick about him seemed to float
Visions of Paradise.

"Why do you stand behind my chair,
And keep on shedding tears?
And whence the lovely music, Maude,
That trickles in my ears?"

She strove to speak, but no words came.
"Have you no kiss?" quoth he,
"Not one kiss for your master dear,
Who loves ye tenderly?"

Then Maud she clasped him round the neck,
And kissed his eyes and mouth;
But he looked strange and took his breath,
Like one agasp from drouth.

Now shuddered she, half scared to see
The working of the charm.
"I cannot stand upon my feet,"
Gasp'd Hugh, "nor raise an arm."

"Oh, child," he groaned, "where did ye get
This cursed handkerchief?
Tell me and say farewell, for sure
My life must now be brief."

SHE.

"It is a magic handkerchief;
A witch-wife gave it me."

HE.

"And know ye not that God his curse
Has set on sorcery?"

SHE.

"Hugh of Scowry, for your sake
I would endure God's ban;
The witch-wife told me it would win back
Your love from that dark woman."

HE.

"'Tis false, 'tis false, you foolish child,
I loved but you alone!
My little Maude, a long farewell;
Alas! what have ye done?"

Then dull as night became his eyes,
Heavily hung his head,
And Maude was like a shotten hind
When she knew that he was dead.

"Oh, false hell-bag, a curse on you
And your deadly sorceries!
Come back, come back, my own true love;
Open once more your eyes.

"And you may love that dark woman,
Nor will I fret at all;
If I may be but your serving maid,
And sleep in your horse's stall."

But heavily, heavily hung his head
That erst was held so high,
And a heavier weight than the weight of sleep
Shut out the light of his eye.

She laid him on a carven bed,
And combed his flaxen hair;
It's "Oh, I have killed my master dear,
And there's none for me to care."

She said, "Lie here my own heart's lord,
We'll be fast wed anon;
For I will find a way to die
Before the day shall dawn."

WHY MAUD GABRIEL LEFT THE STAGE.

BY MAJOR ARTHUR GRIFFITHS,

Author of "The Queen's Shilling," "Lola, A Tale of the Rock,"
"Memorials of Millbank," &c.

I.

SCARBORO' in the winter season, within a week or two of Christmas. The blinds are down at the Grand Hotel, the Spa is a howling wilderness. All the lodging house-keepers have taken the notices out of their windows. Why advertise apartments when there is no business doing? The flyman who drives you from the station wears the air of a naturalist who has discovered a new species. Go to the second-class hotel, which is the only one open, and they will receive you as though you were their long-lost son; killing straightway the fatted calf, to appear later on in such stringy cutlets that clearly the prodigal's return has been premature. There is nothing to do but to wander along the shore and to watch the grand old waves tumble in upon the sands. Not a soul to be seen. Stay!

A young girl, tall and shapely, of graceful carriage, neatly and becomingly dressed. She looks enquiringly around. Stamps her foot, takes a couple of turns, then back to the same spot. Then a voice cries—

"I know I'm late—strike, but hear me."

He spoke in a deep tragedy voice, and threw himself into a theatrical attitude.

"Rehearsal was called for twelve," she said briskly; "it's close on that now. We shall have no time for—"

"Spoons. Let's make the most of it then," and he took her hand.

"How ridiculous you are—don't—someone is coming."

"We are observed. Let us dissemble."

"You goose! You think you can act; but you can't, not one tiny bit—and never will."

"Don't say that. I try so hard. I am so fond of it. If I persevere perhaps, if you will go on teaching me—"

"Bless you, I have my own business to attend to. Come, confess; you know you are not one of us. You are not a professional; you were not born to it as I was, father, mother, before me. You've dropped from goodness knows where, and mother says you're under a false name."

"How do you know that?" he asked, quickly.

"As if Algernon Tomtom could be a real name! Besides, your handkerchiefs are marked 'R.B.'"

"Never mind whether it's my real name or not, at least my love for you is real. I am in real sober earnest when I tell you—"

"Oh! bother. Come, let us make haste, we are late."

The pair hurried off. A strange couple, very dissimilar in appearance. He had the air of a young country squire, was very plainly dressed, had an honest rather simple face, as that of a lad carefully brought up and quite new to life. She, on the other hand, brisk and bright, both in looks and ways, with the self-possession and aplomb of one who could hold her own anywhere.

They made the best of their way to the theatre, and entered by the stage door just before an old gentleman who had followed them post haste down the street could overtake them. They passed in as a matter of course, but the door was slammed in the pursuer's face.

He looked disconcerted. Then collecting his energies, he knocked. First with his knuckles, next loudly with his stick.

"Well?" said the door-keeper, at last, in a surly tone.

"I wish to speak, friend, with that gentleman who has just entered—Robert Branscombe."

"Branscombe be blowed!" A visitor who did not know the names of the company could not have much claim for admission.

"Yes, Branscombe. I must see him—I insist upon seeing him."

"Come to-night then, you'll see him fast enough. And mind you go to the best seats." He was thinking of the treasury and of the value of every half-a-crown in connection with "screws" in arrears.

"I enter a theatre! never! What would they say at 'Meeting'?" I shall wait here till he comes forth, if I wait till dark."

He waited, not quite till dark, but for an hour or two, and to no purpose. The friendly door-keeper had given the office to the young actor, who had made his escape by another door.

That night, among the sparse audience which assembled to witness the performance,—amidst the few shop-boys and their sweethearts, the stray skipper or two from the coasters or fishing boats, and the nondescript idlers who might be anything, from farm labourers to detectives in disguise,—there sat a square-built portly old gentleman in drab, who, from the studious plainness of his attire and the air of mingled protest and scorn upon his face, was obviously a member of the Society of Friends.

He was not at all happy in his mind, that was quite clear. Probably he hated himself for being there at all. He was vexed and annoyed at the causes which had driven him to enter a play-house now, at the end of his life, after having held up such amusements to reprobation for so many years.

Directly the curtain rose he began to manifest signs of great impatience. He kept up a running fire of comments. He apostrophised the actors in no measured terms, found fault with what they said as though they, and not the playwright, were responsible for the sentiments expressed.

It was "pish! pooh! and bah!" in continuous crescendo tones, which reached their climax when Mr. Algernon Tomtom—as

he was called on the bills—appeared upon the stage. At the very sight of the young fellow the old gentleman waxed purple with rage.

"He shall repent this. I'll teach him to bring disgrace upon his family. Actor forsooth! Pie-man, mudlark, chimney-sweep, drainman, anything would have been better. Wait a bit, wait. Only wait, my turn will come next." And so on all through the first act.

In the second the old gentleman conducted himself with increasing impropriety. His remarks were no longer *sotto voce*. They could be heard all over the house. "Order! Order!" was cried more than once, but it was a long-suffering audience without the power that numbers give. The actors turned their eyes to the spot whence the interruption proceeded, but as the old gentleman sat far back in the dress circle they sought explanation in vain.

The play was *The Bells*; it was the wedding-scene. Christian (Mr. Algernon Tomtom) and his bride, the girl who has been his companion on the Spa, were standing before the inn-keeper to receive his blessing, when amidst loud cries of "Police! order! order! police!" the old Quaker leant forward from the front of the dress circle and addressed the meeting.

"Friends, I beseech you to bear with me one moment. You must hear me, you must indeed. This is my son, my runaway scapegrace son, whom I have hunted high and low till I have found him at last in this infamous accursed den. Come out I say, come out Reginald, or I will disown thee for ever."

The confusion by this time was indescribable. Reginald, as soon as he had heard his father's voice, had turned tail and ran from the stage. Then the manager came forward, with scowling looks, to protest in strong terms against this unseemly behaviour, and presently, amidst a storm of groans and hisses, the curtain fell.

II.

TEN YEARS HAVE ELAPSED.

It is the height of the London season, and all the world and hi wife are at Lady Montresor's garden party in Kensington. The place is full of celebrities, literary, poetical, military, theological and dramatic, for her ladyship patronises talent of all kinds, and at her parties extremes meet.

In one corner of the spacious grounds a woman is seated like a queen surrounded by her court; a splendidly handsome woman, with an honest open face and a fearless eye, who has a kindly greeting for all who approach her, and their name is legion.

It is Miss Gabriel, the well-known actress, whose name is on every lip. An actress, who, from her first appearance in London, had carried the town by storm. She has no living equal. She is every inch an artist. Celebrated as she has become she has admirers, of course, by the score, but no one among them all, whatever his intentions, can boast of the smallest encouragement, the slightest sign that he has touched her heart. She is wedded to her profession, she says; an actress she was born, an actress she will live and die. It is this intense affection for her art, and the deep earnestness with which she has set herself to solve its most difficult problems, that has made her so supremely successful.

Lady Montresor now approaches and whispers a few words.

"He is fabulously rich." Maud Gabriel laughs, and says, "I earn more than I can spend."

"But he is also an old friend."

"That is a better claim, Lady Montresor, by far. By all means introduce us; old friends should always renew acquaintance."

"You scarcely remember me," said the quiet, self-contained man, who seemed to combine in his person the aspect of a British peer and an American millionaire.

"Would you answer to the name of Tomtom if the call boy came round the corner?" asked Miss Gabriel, with a jolly laugh.

"Dear, dear, how delightful it is to meet like this after all these years. Where have you been? what have you been doing with yourself? Branscombe, is that your name now? Your real name? you're quite sure?"

There was something very intoxicating in the frank, joyous manner, the friendliness, the unmistakable pleasure it gave her to see him again.

"I have been absent from England ever since. In the States—in Pennsylvania. And you, Miss Gabriel, you are Miss Gabriel still?"

"Very much Miss Gabriel indeed; but now of the Royal Duke's, and if I may say so, upon the high road to fame."

"You are still upon the stage?" he said, with sudden gravity in his tones.

"Most decidedly. You must come and see me act. I have improved a little since the Scarboro' days. There is to be a new piece on Thursday. I will send you a stall."

"Thank you, no." Then seeing her face fall at his discourtesy, he said, "Pardon me; I never go to theatres now. I have not entered one, since—since that memorable night."

"At least you will come and see us at home," went on Miss Gabriel, thinking it best to dismiss the subject. "My mother will welcome you cordially. We live at Chiswick, Eyot Grange. Sunday is the best day to find us. We have generally a crowd of people to a late breakfast, or a lunch, or whatever you like to call it."

Branscombe promised, heartily enough; still there was a little constraint in their talk after this, and when he made his bow they were hardly so friendly as at their first *rencontre*.

Some weeks had slipped by before he had the courage to call at Eyot Grange. There were reasons why he did not wish to re-open communications or become too intimate. But one day he went, and having gone once, went again and yet again, a dozen times, till he became, like a crowd of others, an *habitué* of the house. The place began to possess an irresistible fascination for him. A man of brains and power, long exiled from England, to be here amidst all the best wit and ability of the town was highly delightful. There was no better talk, no better criticism, and no better fun to be found in all London. But it was the central sun which was the principal attraction for him, like the rest, moths all, fluttering around the radiant and alluring light. Maud Gabriel was the life and soul of the place. They all worshipped her according to their degree. Most of them called her "Maud" in the frank fashion of Bohemia. She was like a "pal," like one of themselves, taking an interest in all that was said and done, and playing the hostess—her mother was a quiet, retiring old lady, who only smiled and nodded her head—with infinite tact and success.

Branscombe swallowed the bait whole. Within a month or two, he was caught and landed, helplessly, hopelessly in love. Maud Gabriel knew it, she was certain that he loved her. She guessed it instinctively, as any other woman would from the tones in his voice, the look in his eyes—they were good honest eyes, as she often told herself—and long ago her heart had gone forth to him with a bound, re-opening and reviving the half-forgotten love of former days. And yet he made no sign. Shyness perhaps sealed his lips; or he did not dare, he would not venture, he feared to risk his chances, dreading failure as more than he could bear. Maud might have been uneasy, but she thought she knew him so well; she felt so safe, it would all come right in good time. She could wait. What matter? She had waited ten years already.

Then the talk turned upon another new piece at the Royal Duke's, from which great things were expected. Everybody meant to be at the “first night,” at least everybody worth knowing. And so it proved when the night came. The audience was most select. Tickets had been secured “ages” in advance. The stalls were filled by the salt of London. Managers, dukes, newspaper proprietors had the best boxes; even in the gallery the struggle for places, like that for existence, had sent only the most appreciative to the front.

So they laughed at the stranger who, in rough overcoat concealing a suit of dittoes, came at the eleventh hour to ask for a stall. He could not be “much ‘count” or he would be in evening clothes. They were very correct people at the Royal Duke's. The attendants even wore knee breeches and called the seats “fotools.”

“Can't have one. There ain't no *must* in the matter when there ain't no seat.”

“But I want to see Miss Gabriel—”

“So does everybody else, only they come in time.”

“Well, will you send in my card to her—she is a particular friend—”

The box-keeper said “gammon,” but a tip of half-a-sovereign changed it to “good,” and he was glad when the card came back with the words, “Do the best you can.”

Branscombe was given a corner of a box on the grand tier.

Maud was an accomplished actress, wholly engrossed in her part, but she played at that box all through the piece; played, too, with such *verve* and genius that it was clear that she meant to add another laurel to her reputation that night. As the play proceeded its interest concentrated itself more and more around her, and at the close of every act she was called to the front amidst vociferous applause.

In the midst of one of her most impassioned scenes, when all the audience hung breathless on her words, Reginald Branscombe, with a fierce shake of his head, rose abruptly and went out of the house.

“You were triumphantly successful last night,” said one of her most constant admirers next day. “I could not resist the pleasure of coming out to offer my congratulations.”

“You are very good, Colonel Alsager. You think I made a hit?”

“It was marvellous. There was not a dry eye in the house. Even Branscombe—you know he was there?”

“Was he?”

“You know that as well as I do. You played to him, and at him, I could see it with half an eye.”

“Nonsense. I shall not listen to you if you talk like that. I did nothing of the kind. What is Mr. Branscombe to me?”

“Very little, I trust,” said the other, seriously.

“What do you mean?”

“Do not press me,” said Colonel Alsager, mysteriously.

“But I insist. You dislike my friend Mr. Branscombe, I know that. But you shall not malign or misrepresent him without at least stating your grounds.”

“I am sorry I spoke at all. You take up the case so warmly that I can see my mistake.”

“Colonel Alsager, this is worse than trifling. You must and shall explain yourself.”

“If you insist. But do not blame me. I wish but to warn you, to guard you from committing a great and grievous mistake. You may love Reginald Branscombe, he may love you in return, but he can never make you his wife.”

The blood forsook Maud's cheeks; even her cheeks blanched.

“Colonel Alsager, how dare you! How dare you make such an unfounded assertion!”

“It is the truth. He can never marry you. There is an insuperable objection.”

“Explain yourself, for pity's sake.”

“Surely I need not. Cannot you understand?”

He was married already! The thought struck her with a sudden shock of pain, as though a bullet had pierced her heart. The next moment anger, fierce and unrelenting, filled it. She understood all now. His coldness, his hesitation, the struggle between right and wrong which had torn his mind, all this was as plain as noonday. All at once light and life and colour had gone out of the world, and the future looked a grey unutterable void.

Without another word, overcome by her feelings and in a passion of grief, she rushed from the room.

They came up presently and told her that Mr. Branscombe had called and begged most particularly to see her. She denied herself. They came again and yet again. He would wait. He must and would see her.

By-and-by she went down.

“I came to offer my humble tribute,” he began. “I cannot tell you how much I was affected by your marvellous acting. I was carried completely away. But you are out of sorts,” he said, tenderly, “over-worked, not well?”

“Thank you,” she replied in icy tones. “There is nothing the matter with me.”

“Something surely has vexed you. Something has gone wrong. May I not presume, as a very old friend, to ask, to try and supply a remedy, to offer consolation, if it lies in my power?”

He got up from his chair and stood over her, but she turned away from him with a gesture of contempt.

“It is this life you lead. This atmosphere you breathe, the excitement nightly, the applause, the adulation, all this is so bad for you. Why not give it up?”

“Give up my art? Never!” she cried. “I love it, worship it with my whole soul. I will never abandon the stage while I have life and strength to tread the boards.”

“Is this your final resolve?” There was an earnestness in his voice which, in spite of herself and of the mood she was in towards him, touched her to the quick. “Would nothing induce you to leave the stage?”

“Nothing.”

“I came here to ask you to make the sacrifice for my sake—”

“And what,” she cried, giving vent to her indignation, and speaking with the bitterest scorn, “what would you offer me in return? If I make the sacrifice—sad for you—what then? Oh, Reginald Branscombe, why force me to think so badly of you after all these years?”

“You despise my love? You will not take me—as I am?”

“Love! laugh! Before you commit yourself to words you cannot recall—to proposals which it would shame me no less to listen to you than they would you to make—let me tell you that I know all. I know that you cannot marry me. That an insuperable difficulty intervenes.”

“You have heard then? But this difficulty—it is not insuperable—there you have been misinformed. It is one that might easily be removed could I but reconcile the step with my own self-respect.”

He fairly took her breath away. Was he meditating the immediate removal of his wife by strychnine? Did he contemplate bigamy, an elopement to the Salt Lake City, or what?

“This obstacle you say may be removed?” she faltered out, half in anger, half in amazed enquiry. “Do you mean that it—”

“She?”

“Yes: your present wife.”

“My dearest girl, we are at terrible cross-purposes. I have no present wife. I am not married, I have never been married in all my life.”

“What then is the difficulty?”

“Simply this. My father left me his fortune and estates absolutely, but saddled with one condition. They go to an asylum for idiots if I marry any lady who, at the time of marriage, earns her living as an actress on the stage. This is why I have hesitated. Can you forgive me? I hate myself for having doubted even for one moment. You shall not give up your profession, I will resign my fortune instead. For a time—until I can make my own way anew—I may be a pensioner on your bounty, and it is that alone which has so long sealed my tongue. Maud, once more, will you take me as I am?”

“No, Reginald, you shall not outdo me in generosity. A woman is capable of self-sacrifice too. You have won me, and no matter what the price may be, you shall gain your reward. From henceforth the English stage shall know me no more.”

THE DORMER GIRLS.

By WILLIAM H. GARRETT.

THE house in which Mr. Scarlett Price lived was situated in St. Anne-street, Liverpool. He occupied a suite of rooms nearly facing the large urn of white marble which has so long stood in a corner of the burial-ground attached to Trinity Church. It was towards this pale and solitary monument, which seems still further etiolated by time and exposure, that he might have been seen gloomily directing his eyes one wet afternoon, about a dozen years ago. Let it not be supposed, however, that any sad memories were evoked by his contemplation of this tomb. Its associations had rather less interest for him than those of the wooden one of the Capulets, which he had seen on the stage of the old house in Williamson-square on the previous night. The simple fact was that he was discontentedly regarding the rain as it fell in drenching sheets on the monument. Then he resumed his perusal of the *Daily Post*, and when he looked across the way, half an hour later, he saw that the blanched urn had become dry, a sufficient indication that the downfall had quite ceased. The face of Mr. Price brightened at this discovery; he rose from his chair at the window, stretched himself, and went to the chimney-glass, in which he attentively regarded his features for some moments. He was a short and somewhat stout man of two-and-thirty, whose dark curling hair had already become so scanty as to give evidence that actual baldness would soon follow. His face, though very fallow, was not displeasing, and he appeared to be strongly of that opinion himself, for he smiled with undisguised satisfaction as he continued to gaze at the reflection of his own visage. This valuable mark of approval from so unprejudiced an observer was followed by his daintily taking the ends of his black silk necktie between his forefingers and thumbs in order to make the bow a little tighter. He was just then interrupted by a knock at the door, and the parlour-maid, a moment after, ushered in a tall, well-made young man, whose face looked so fresh and youthful that you would not have supposed him to be but a lustrum the junior of Scarlett Price.

“Ah, Westbury, is that you? How glad I am you've come,” exclaimed the latter, as he shook the hand of his visitor with unwonted cordiality. “Half an hour ago I made up my mind that I should see nothing of you to-day. What miserable weather we have had lately. But it's fine enough now for our visit,” he added quickly.

“I don't know about that,” answered Paul Westbury, looking doubtfully towards the windows. “I think I mentioned to you, when I offered to take you with me to the Dormers, that I wasn't to be expected by them if the weather was bad.”

Mr. Price pulled down each of the immaculate cuffs of his shirt, and said, “Um! why, yes, you told me something of that sort; but really I think we might risk the chance of its coming on to rain again. The fact is, I've a great desire to be introduced to Mr. Dormer. I hear that his daughters are most charming girls, and that he is capital company himself. When he asked you, therefore, to bring a friend to make one at a game of whist to-night, I thought it a nice opportunity to get acquainted with him, and I confess that I shall be rather disappointed if we don't go.”

“Oh, well, if that's the case, I must do what I can to oblige you,” replied Paul Westbury, laughing. “But if it's the girls you want to see, I doubt if there is more than one of them at home; and as to Mr. Dormer being capital company, he doesn't talk much when there is whist going on, as you may suppose. And now I think we had better take advantage of the present state of the weather and walk down to Church-street, where we can catch the six o'clock omnibus to Aigburth.”

When the young men reached the street, Scarlett Price said, “Which of the two girls is at home—the light-haired one?”

“Yes; Netta, the younger.”

“And the prettier too?”

“That's a matter of opinion,” observed Paul Westbury dryly. “But I was not aware that you had ever seen either of them.”

“I saw both of them once. They were pointed out to me at the Botanic Gardens this summer, and I was told at the same time that old Dormer is worth heaps of money.” Scarlett Price glanced inquiringly at his friend as he uttered the concluding words.

“I shouldn't think he was, from what little I have seen of his way of living; though I dare say he is tolerably well off,” answered Paul Westbury simply.

“My dear fellow, he confessed, I am told, to have cleared half a million just after the war broke out between the North and the South,” rejoined the other, in a low, eager voice.

“Cleared half a million! How?”

“How? Why, by speculating in cotton, to be sure. Alderman Sun, and others in this town besides him, made double the sum during that year, and by the same means.”

“I should never have guessed that Mr. Dormer had been a speculator,” remarked Paul Westbury thoughtfully; “particularly when I call to mind his way of playing vingt-et-un, or rather van-john, as he prefers to call it. Still, I once heard him grumble a good deal about the large sum he has to pay yearly for income-tax.”

“Have you known him long?” asked the elder man in a careless tone.

“A few months,” was the reply.

“He has been a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, hasn't he?”

“A lieutenant! Nothing of the kind. He has been in the Navy; but he belonged to the non-combatants. His duties only called on him to shed ink, not blood. He was a paymaster.”

“You heard that from himself?”

“Well, no,” replied Paul Westbury, hesitating. “The fact is, I heard it from Ro—from one of his daughters.”

“Oh, indeed! Then that settles the question with just as much certainty,” said the other, and they walked on in silence.

In the omnibus Paul Westbury was fully occupied with his own thoughts, and they were of a kind to give rise to some

anxiety. Mr. Robert Dormer, of Heathergay House, had just been presented to the mind of the young man in a new light, and one which was not encouraging to the hopes he had conceived of one day becoming the son-in-law of the ex-paymaster. A Customs' clerk, however small his salary as yet, was socially the equal, at least, of a paymaster in the Navy. But it became quite another question when the paymaster was found to have twenty-five thousand a-year, while the clerk in the Customs had but reached the modest annual income of £150.

When they were getting near the hotel at which the omnibus would finally stop, Paul Westbury said to his companion, “Do you know you have quite taken me by surprise respecting Mr. Dormer's wealth? For a man with his vast resources he certainly lives very plainly.”

“So I've heard; but they say he is a bit of a screw. Old Bob Dormer is well known in St. John's Market as a confirmed haggler. He will stand there chaffering over the price of a brace of pheasants, or of a turkey, for a good half-hour, and end by purchasing nothing, if he can't get what he wants at his own price. But the people there have found out a way of managing him now. They always ask a fourth more than they really mean to take, so both buyer and seller are quite satisfied with the result.”

“You seem to have ascertained a good deal about Mr. Dormer, for one who is not even acquainted with him,” observed Paul Westbury, with some wonder in the expression of his eyes.

“Very rich men have long had a peculiar interest for me,” replied the other quietly. “I like to learn something of their ways.”

After a pause Paul Westbury said, with a sigh, “I wish I could make some money by speculating in cotton.”

“Why not try it?” responded Scarlett Price, laughing. “If another war with the Confederates should break out—as some folk think will ere long be the case—you would have an unusually good opportunity. In that event, don't forget the existence of Call and Price, cotton brokers, Exchange-buildings. We shall be happy to afford you our best advice and assistance.”

“When I rise to be Controller of Her Majesty's Customs I may possibly have some money to spare for speculation; but that happy time will not arrive even soon enough to take advantage of the next war among the Americans, I fear,” said Paul Westbury, smiling, “unless you could get a Cabinet Minister or two to say a few words in my behalf.”

“I regret to say that the cares of cotton have as yet prevented my making the acquaintance of any of the right honourable gentlemen in question,” answered Scarlett Price gaily, as they descended from the vehicle.

Heathergay House was about half-a-mile beyond the point where they alighted, but the cotton-broker seemed to be perfectly aware of its exact situation without any information from Paul. It was a long, square building of two storeys, standing in its own grounds, and approached by a winding carriage-drive. There was not the faintest trace of heather anywhere in the grounds or in the neighbourhood, which was probably considered a sufficient reason for giving the house the name of Heathergay.

They found Mr. Dormer on the steps of the main entrance with his round, red face raised to the leaden-tinted sky in examination of the weather, and his thumbs thrust into the armholes of a white waistcoat that he wore. At the sound of approaching footsteps he lowered his head and turned a pair of small, watery eyes of the palest blue towards the visitors. He passed his hand over his mouth and smiled on hearing the name of Paul's companion, but he gave them both a hearty welcome, and led the way with much cheerfulness to the drawing-room.

“My daughter Netta will be here presently,” he said, “and in the meantime I'll ring for coffee.”

“I suppose Miss Dormer has not yet returned from North Wales?” inquired Paul rather timidly, during a pause in the conversation.

“Well, no; we expected that she would get back this afternoon, but she has written to say that she has been prevailed upon to stay till to-morrow. By the way, I'm greatly obliged to you for making a journey here with your friend in such unpromising weather. He must be a great lover of whist to come so far for a game,” said Mr. Dormer, turning to the cotton-broker.

“Whist? Oh, yes, I like whist well enough,” replied the latter, who was at that moment engaged in a rapid survey of the contents of the room, and spoke with a remarkable absence of enthusiasm.

“I thought so,” went on Mr. Dormer, the corners of his mouth slightly twitching; “and that reminds me, I think I once saw you with one of the best players I ever sat down to a table with—Mr. Cooke.”

“Nothing more likely; Mr. Cooke is an old acquaintance of mine, and I believe he has a passion for short whist,” was the answer.

A door, communicating with another room, opened just then and Netta Dormer entered. She was a tall girl, of graceful figure, but with no claims whatever to beauty.

For the next half-hour, however, Scarlett Price hardly ever moved his eyes from her, and when she spoke, which was certainly not infrequently, he listened to her with an expression in his face of respectful admiration, which occasionally struck Paul Westbury as rather comic.

At length a card table was opened, and the usual cutting for partners took place. The result of this proceeding was that the two young men found themselves opposed to Mr. Dormer and his daughter. After this, little was said, of course, on either side for a considerable time. The rubber was played without the visitors winning a game. Again the cards were cut, but without causing any change of partners. Just then, Mr. Dormer, taking a bunch of keys from his pocket, went into the adjoining room for a couple of packs of new cards to replace those they had been using. Scarlett Price availed himself of this opportunity to say plaintively that he knew at the outset he should not play well; his remark being accompanied by an ill-executed sigh and a steadfast look at Netta.

She laughed on noticing the expression of his face, and asked, “How could you possibly know that, Mr. Price?”

“I was sure I should play badly when I found you were not to be my partner,” he said, as he shook his head dolefully.

The answer was received by her with a merry laugh, and she asked, giving a sly glance at her colloquist, “Do you intend to continue your bad play, so long as I am on the side against you?”

“Impossible to do otherwise,” protested the young cotton-broker, and he seemed about to add something more when he caught sight of Mr. Dormer as he stood in the doorway, tearing off the coverings from the two packs.

“Then I should like to bet an extra half-crown on this rubber,” she said, with a mischievous twinkle in her clear blue eyes.

“Don't you believe all that men say, my dear,” interposed the father. “Mr. Price made the most he could out of a succession of bad hands, and did it very cleverly too.”

“What do you say to such a compliment about your playing as that?” demanded Paul Westbury, as he took up one of the new packs and began shuffling the cards.

“Say?” replied Scarlett Price, stammering a little. “Why, I say that ‘approbation from Sir Hubert Stanley is praise indeed,’

and that I must strive to deserve it, when a change of partners takes place."

"I hardly expected that you would have had a recourse to *A Cure for the Heartache* at this early period of the evening," rejoined Paul Westbury, glancing at Netta.

Mr. Dormer looked puzzled at these allusions, and said, "Mr. Price, why do you call me Sir Hubert Stanley: are you thinking of the late Sir Massey Stanley across the river—I mean of Hooton?"

"Oh, merely a quotation from an old play," explained the gentleman addressed.

"Is it? Ah, I seldom go to a theatre. We live too far out of town to go without a good deal of—of inconvenience," remarked Mr. Dormer, taking up his cards.

Scarlett Price certainly did not fall into the mistake of again playing well after what he had declared to Netta, for he not only trumped tricks already his partner's, but at last made a revoke by which he lost the second rubber in spite of a very strong hand which he had held. Paul Westbury, whose money had been disappearing with as much celerity as regularity, at the end of the two games that followed suggested that Netta should favour them with some music from the new

opera of *Faust*. She looked at her father enquiringly, and he at once signified his approval of this proposition by going to the piano and opening it.

"You must find it rather trying to lose so many games, Mr. Westbury, and I don't wonder you should wish for a little change," he observed while engaged in drawing out the music-stool from beneath the keyboard.

"Change? Well, I confess that I haven't much remaining," responded Paul, laughing; and then Netta sat down at the piano, while Scarlett Price volunteered to find a certain piece of music that she named.



TIDY FOR CHRISTMAS.

When she had been playing for a few minutes, Mr. Dormer leant towards an ottoman, on which the elder of his guests was now sitting, and whispered, "Pretty good that, for an amateur, now, isn't it?"

"Pretty good!" echoed the cotton-broker, showing a great deal of the whites of his eyes in an effort to look surprised. "Why, it is absolutely exquisite. I could shut my eyes," he added, still keeping them very wide open though, "and fancy that I was listening to Arabella Goddard."

"Oh, Mr. Price, I find that you are quite a flatterer," cried

Netta, who could not avoid noticing a compliment which was designedly uttered in a somewhat loud voice. "Don't you think he is, Mr. Westbury?" she asked, while continuing to thump the keys before her in a manner which of itself was a sufficient answer to her question.

"Well, yes; I am afraid he is," replied Paul, with more candour than discretion.

"Very different from you, I must say," she rejoined, rather coldly.

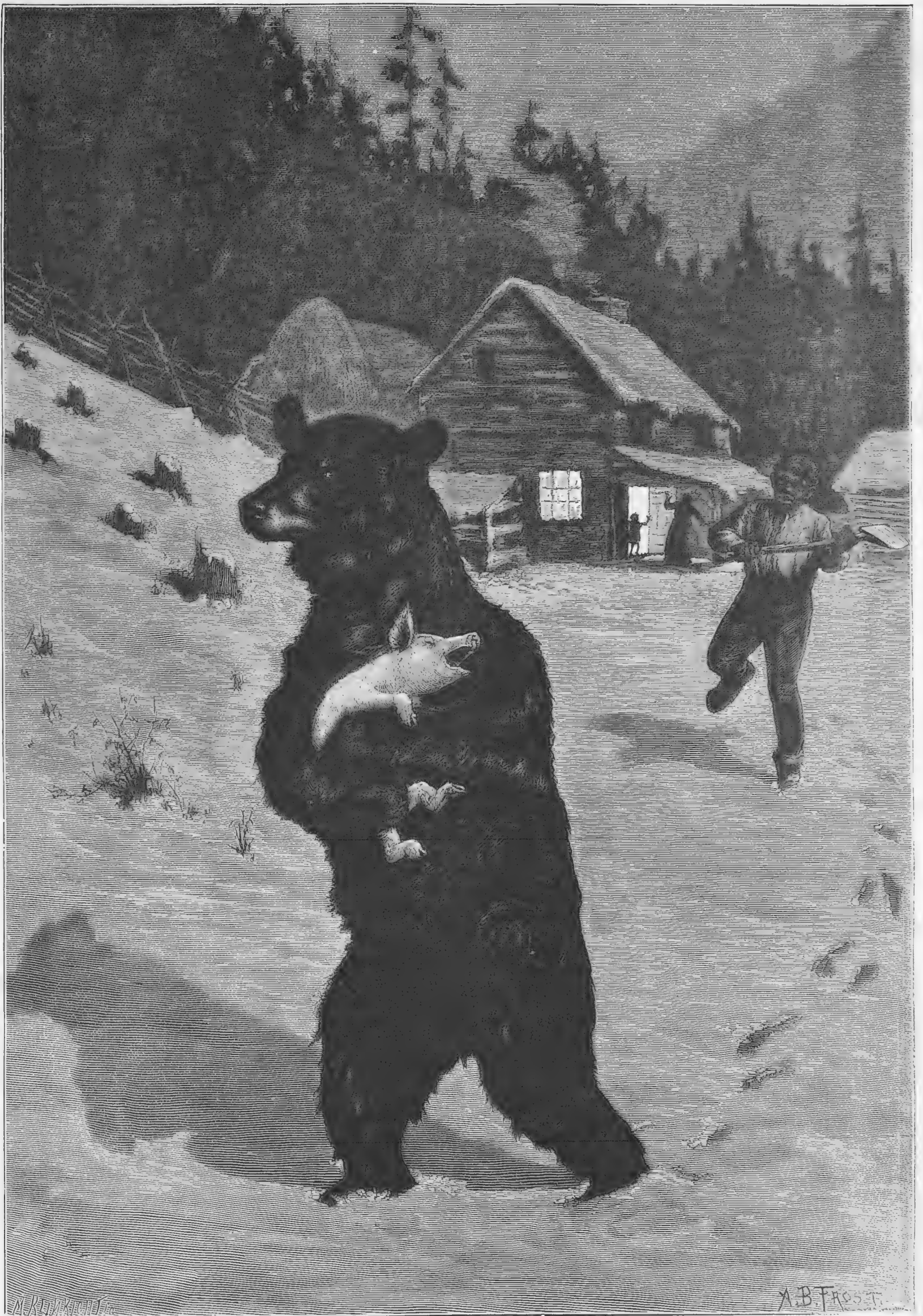
"By the by," interposed Mr. Dormer, looking down at his

white waistcoat, and passing his hand over his mouth, you will come and see us on Tuesday, Mr. Westbury? It'll be Netta's birthday. Just a plain dinner, you know, and if your friend will favour us with his company also we shall be very glad, eh, Netta?"

"Very glad indeed, papa."

"I shall be only too delighted," answered Scarlett Price; and he really looked as if he were speaking without hyperbole.

"If you will give me your address, I will see that a formal invitation is sent," promised Netta.



BRUIN'S CHRISTMAS DINNER.—"STOP THIEF!"

"Oh, care of Call and Price, cotton-brokers, will find me," answered Scarlett Price, not sorry of the opportunity which had presented itself to let a possible speculator in cotton know that one of his guests was familiar with that commodity, and, beyond that, a partner in a firm of some note.

The hand of Mr. Dormer again hovered round his mouth, and he remarked, after a slight pause, "I have heard Mr. Cooke speak of your firm. It's an old one, and did a large business in your father's time, I believe."

"We do a pretty large business still," said Scarlett Price, and then he artfully led the conversation to the subject of the large fortunes which had been made in cotton within the last four years. But his host did not encourage a continuance of the topic, and made no allusion whatever to his own successes as a speculator.

When supper was over—the dinner-hour was an early one at Heathergay—and the two visitors were making their way homewards, the elder of them abruptly said, "Isn't it curious how niggardly some rich men are? There's that old Dormer now with all his money, he doesn't keep a carriage."

"How did you find that out?" enquired Paul.

"Oh, from what he told us about the inconvenience of getting to a theatre and back. And did you notice how pleased he looked as he swept the half-crowns into his pocket after each rubber?"

"More pleased than I," replied Paul rather grimly; "that I am quite willing to believe. When next you grow sentimental at whilst, I devoutly hope that the fates won't give you to me for a partner."

"Well," rejoined the other laughing, "I suspect, Westbury, that it's as much your interest to conciliate old Dormer as it is mine. If we hadn't let him win all before him to-night I doubt very much whether we should have been favoured with an invitation to dinner next Tuesday, by which time, you know, Miss Dormer will have returned from North Wales."

"You are really smitten then with Miss Netta?"

"I think her a charming girl, and I venture to believe that I made myself very agreeable to her—for the time that I was in her society. What do you say?" Scarlett Price as he put this question took off his hat and ran each hand in succession through his scanty locks.

"I really can form no idea as to what impression you made upon her; but I dare say she was pleased enough with you as a visitor. I should fancy, however, that she is not at all susceptible."

"I say, Westbury," remarked the cotton-broker after a silence, "it will be a splendid match for you if you marry one of the Dormer girls, won't it?"

"That would depend on which," answered Paul, smiling.

"The younger, for instance, wouldn't suit me at all."

"The devil she wouldn't! Have you found out then that Dormer is going to leave all his money to the elder daughter?" asked Scarlett Price eagerly.

"Not I, indeed," replied the other, in a careless tone.

"Oh, I see; you are too spoony on one to be happy with the other. Well, you've made your choice, and so have I. Very fortunately, we have not become rivals."

"You seem to have quite made up your mind to marry Netta."

"Quite so. I am not a poor man, and my business yields me a handsome income; so I don't know what objection old Dormer could have to my becoming his son-in-law. However, I shall not let the grass grow under my feet, I can tell you. If you are wise, you'll follow my example. A girl with two or three plums for a dowry isn't allowed to remain single very long—especially such a splendid girl as Netta Dormer."

They were just then overtaken by a cab returning to town, and they engaged it to convey them to their several homes. Scarlett Price was in high spirits as he talked further to his companion of the matrimonial project that the former had conceived, and when they were about to part Paul said, "Well, you have my best wishes; but the suddenness of your decision has rather astonished me."

"Oh, you think it sudden, do you? But you forget that I saw Netta Dormer at the Botanic Gardens some weeks ago. It was a case of love at first sight," continued Scarlett Price, laughing. "Her very name had a fascination for me."

"Particularly her surname, I suppose," said Paul, as he took leave of his interlocutor.

"How can you say that," cried Scarlett Price, "knowing as you do that I am going to make her change it?"

"All the same," thought Paul, as he ascended the steps of the house where he lodged; "he wouldn't be in so great a hurry to wed if she weren't the daughter of wealthy Robert Dormer."

The occasion being a special one, the master of Heathergay had consented to alter his dinner-hour to six on the following Tuesday. Netta had, indeed, gone so far as to suggest eight o'clock as a time more in accordance with the modern usages of fashionable life; but he would make no further concession. Paul arrived very early, as he hoped for a tête-à-tête with Rosina before dinner. In this he was not disappointed, for he found her alone in the drawing-room, but learnt that Scarlett Price had preceded him, and was at that moment in the garden with Netta and her father.

"Do you know, Rosina," said Paul, after they had been talking for some minutes, "I have heard news since we last met which has made me rather unhappy."

She raised her bright brown eyes to his, and a look of anxiety came into her expressive face as she uttered the monosyllable, "Oh?"

"Yes; I hear that your father is immensely rich," he went on.

"Is he?" said Rosina simply. "Well, he never says much about his riches to us. But why should your having heard of his wealth make you unhappy, Paul?"

"Because he is all the less likely to consent to our engagement, I had intended, you know, to speak to him on that subject while you were away in Wales; but I couldn't bring myself to do so, after hearing what I did."

"But you intend to tell him, Paul, don't you?" she inquired, looking a little scared.

"Well, I don't quite know what course to take," he replied.

"I am inclined to prefer uncertainty as to what he will do to the certainty that would follow my talking to him of making you my wife. He would probably forbid me the house, and then what should we do?"

"Why, what a dreadful thing it appears to be to have too much money!" she exclaimed. "And yet I have heard it said that a poor couple had better remain single. Not that we are poor," she went on quickly and earnestly, "I didn't mean that, Paul."

"I am afraid we should be, if we married against your father's wish, for I have nothing but my pay, and that's not—" He stopped, for at that moment Mr. Dormer and his younger daughter entered the room, followed by Scarlett Price, who seemed in unusually high spirits, and led the conversation till dinner was announced.

There was but one other guest, a very gaunt young lady, who had been at school with Netta, and was now residing with an invalid aunt in the neighbourhood.

The face of Mr. Dormer was even redder than usual that evening, and his hand busier than ever in covering the expression of his mouth, as he watched the marked attention of Scarlett Price to Netta. Some time after the ladies had vacated the dining-

room, the host abruptly said, "By the by, I might as well avail myself of the presence of you two gentlemen. I wrote out my will a few days ago, and want a couple of witnesses."

"Drew up your own will!" exclaimed Scarlett Price in surprise. "In a matter of such importance, isn't it far better to employ a lawyer? However, I'm at your service, of course," he added, while a flush of excitement came over his face.

"You have not had as much experience of lawyers as I have, or you wouldn't believe so firmly in them, Mr. Price."

"Oh, I am not expressing any firm belief in them; but I think—"

"That I can't draw up a will which can be understood as well as a solicitor can do so," interrupted Mr. Dormer. "Well, when I find that the wills even of Lord Chancellors are often so worded as to give rise to litigation, I don't see the use of throwing away one's money in attorney's costs over an affair of that sort. Besides, by drawing up the thing myself I run no risk of burying my meaning under a mountain of words."

"All the same; you must admit that two heads are better than one. You might inadvertently use an equivocal sentence, or you might omit something of importance."

Mr. Dormer did not immediately reply; but he rose from the table, went to a large old-fashioned desk of mahogany, and after unlocking it, took out a sheet of blue letter-paper, with which he returned to his seat. "There," he said, "as you rather doubt my ability to say what I mean, Mr. Price, read that, and tell me whether you clearly understand it or not. Of course, I don't want all the world to know the contents," he went on with a slight laugh, "so you needn't mention how I've disposed of my property on 'Change to-morrow."

"Certainly not," answered the cotton-broker, as he took the paper and compressed his lips, as if fearing that their involuntary movement might betray his agitation. When he had read to the end, he said, "Nothing could be clearer, so far as I can judge."

"Then I will trouble you and Mr. Westbury to attest my signature," observed Mr. Dormer, as he produced a pen and ink.

When the document was duly signed by the three men, the eldest suggested that they should rejoin the ladies in the drawing-room, and then stroll in the grounds for half-an-hour, as the night was very sultry. Both Paul and his friend readily acquiesced in this proposal, for they saw that it gave promise of greater freedom of movement than they could expect within doors. Nor were they mistaken in this view; in fact, no sooner did they enter the grounds with the ladies than Mr. Dormer made his way by himself to a summer-house, where he was discovered fast asleep with a clay pipe in his hand nearly two hours after.

"Do you know what old Dormer told me just before I left?" asked Scarlett Price, as he walked homewards with Paul that night. "Why, that Miss Tobin— isn't that the name of the girl who sat next you at dinner?"

"Yes."

"Well, he told me that she is a niece, in fact, the only relative, of Mrs. Stebbing. Now, I happen to know something of Mrs. Stebbing, whose house we shall presently pass. I once met her at a party, and a friend of mine told me that her niece would come into possession of property worth £12,000 when the old lady dies."

"What an interest you take in people with money," said Paul, in a tone of indifference, which was followed by a yawn.

"Yes; I told you that I did when we were talking of old Dormer the other day. But I want you to take an interest in this Miss Tobin. With a nice little fortune such as hers, Westbury, you might be very comfortable."

"So might you, I suppose," retorted Paul, coldly.

"Ah! but my intentions have someone else for their object. In fact, I have already touched upon a certain subject with Netta, and from what she said I'm sure she will marry me whenever I ask her."

"I congratulate you," said Paul, without any show of cordiality.

"Thank you; but look here, there is something I should like to tell you," Scarlett Price stopped in the road as he spoke.

"Then tell it, by all means," advised the other, also coming to a standstill.

"You'll not mention that I have spoken to you about the matter?"

"I can't, for you haven't done so."

"But I'm about to do so."

"Very well; what is it you have to reveal? I hope you are not going to tell me that Mr. Dormer committed murder in early life," responded Paul with a tinge of sarcasm; "and therefore that you have some scruples in forming an alliance with his family."

"I am going to tell you something about the contents of that will which I read to-night," replied Scarlett Price gravely.

"Oh, is that all?" rejoined the other, laughing.

"I don't think you'll laugh when you hear what I have to say," remarked Scarlett Price, a little nettled. "Old Dormer has left, to use the words of his will, all his moneys invested in stocks, funds, and securities, all debts due to him, and all his estate and effects, whether real or personal—whether in possession, reversion, remainder, or expectancy, to his daughter—" He paused, and then asked, "You would like to know to which of his daughters, wouldn't you?"

"If you have no objections," answered Paul quietly; "though it won't alter my intentions whichever way he has disposed of his fortune."

"Everything he possesses is left to Netta."

"Paul drew a long breath, and then said, 'Well, I confess that you surprise me; but Rosina and I must be content to wait for a couple of years longer before we marry; that's all. Still, it's curious he should treat her so.'"

"But he hasn't left her penniless. All he has is to go to Netta, it is true; but subject to the payment of a sum of £4,000 to Rosina—a mere nothing compared with what one would have expected."

"I have again to congratulate you on your good fortune," said Paul cheerfully.

"Much obliged, Westbury; and in order to make sure of it I shall come to a clear understanding both with Netta and her father ere I am many hours older."

Scarlett Price must have acted in accordance with this resolve, for within the next fortnight he became the husband of Netta, and they set out to pass the honeymoon in Paris.

Not long after this event Paul Westbury paid a visit to his father, who had recently been presented to a valuable living in London. The result of a long consultation with the newly-appointed rector was that Paul, immediately on his return to Liverpool, sat down to write a proposal to Robert Dormer for the hand of Rosina. At the expiration of an hour he was still sitting with the remains of a quire of note-paper before him. The rest of it was lying about the table in sheets half covered with writing. He had found it a difficult task to express his feelings in a manner satisfactory to himself on a subject that so deeply concerned his future happiness. Yet he could no longer delay making this proposal, as he had promised his father that he would neither see Rosina nor write to her until the fact of her engagement had been made known to Robert Dormer. The young man had just begun another note on this topic when a knock came to the drawing room door, and Scarlett Price entered.

"The maid-of-all-work below told me that I should find you here—her way of saving herself the trouble of announcing me," said he gravely, as he held out his hand to Paul. The latter took it mechanically, being anxious at that moment to hide his extravagant consumption of stationery by sweeping the spoiled sheets into a drawer.

"Is your wife quite well?" asked Paul, as he threw the note he was writing into the drawer that had received the other papers.

"As well as can be expected under such trying circumstances?" answered the visitor, gloomily.

"What trying circumstances?" demanded Paul, wonderingly.

"Ah, I see. You know nothing of what has recently taken place at Heathergay."

"No; I have been away in London for the last ten days. Why, you are in mourning, Price!" exclaimed Paul.

"Yes, I couldn't well avoid going into black for my father-in-law," observed the other, coolly.

"What, is Mr. Dormer dead?" asked Paul, in an agitated voice.

"I've every reason to believe so, for he was buried in St. James's Cemetery yesterday."

"This is shocking news, indeed. Why, I was in the act of writing to him when you came in."

"Well, I have just given you his last address," said Price, with a grim smile. "You think the news shocking, do you? Now, to my mind, what I have yet to tell you is still more shocking. I have been deceived, Westbury—scandalously deceived."

"By whom?"

"By that old snake, Bob Dormer, for one," replied Scarlett Price, through his clenched teeth. "I've been with his attorneys most of the afternoon, and what do you think I've discovered? Why, that the scheming old fox—no wonder he was struck down with apoplexy—didn't die worth more than £6,000 at the utmost, including even his household furniture and plate. Now, perhaps you will be good enough to tell me," continued the cotton-broker, bitterly, "what will remain for me after paying Rosina the £4,000 left to her by her father's will?"

"Well," replied Paul, demurely, "I should say, according to your statement, about £2,000."

"Then I think you will agree with me that I have been made the miserable dupe of old Dormer."

"Did he ever tell you what he was worth before you married his daughter?" asked Paul.

"Neither before nor after," answered Price, beginning to pace up and down the room.

"Then I really can't see how you can accuse him of deceiving you."

"No doubt he caused reports to be spread respecting his wealth, just to get his daughters off his hands."

"But what about your friend Mr. Cooke, and his tale respecting the half a million of money?" enquired Paul, hardly able to repress a smile at the rueful face before him.

"I don't know," replied the other, sulkily. "If Dormer ever did make a large fortune by speculating in cotton, he must have lost it again. Anyhow, you don't seem to feel much sympathy for me under such a cruel disappointment."

"Why, you have got a wife that you declared to be a charming girl, and you have a couple of thousand to provide her with pin-money; so I really must decline to waste my pity on you."

"Then I will not interrupt you further than to say that I shall always consider myself a deeply-injured man, and that I am not at all sure my wife wasn't in the plot against me," answered Scarlett Price, as he moved towards the door.

STOP THIEF!!!

"NEBBER tole yer 'bout dat ar bar and de choat? Sho now, it's mighty curus I nebbber tole yer 'bout dat ar. Jes' you sit down honey an eat dem slap-jacks I se done fried for you, an' I'll tell you 'bout it."

And watching with delight my appreciation of the delicious "slap-jacks" Aunt Chloe continued her narrative as she cooked.

"Dat was de fust winter we was in Firginny after de war. De lawful sakes, but dem was awful times. Nebber a soul to gib a poor nigger a cabin or nuffin to war or nuffin to eat! Nebber seen no sich times down in Georgia, fo' de war! An' de cole! Ebery bone in yer body achey, achey, grindin' an' tomented wif de rheumatiz, and yer jaws wust ob all! An' de snow! Oh honey, de snow was de wuster ob all, an' no shoes harf de time! Oh lor!"

"But about the bear and the pig, Aunt Chloe?"

"Yes, I was a comin' to dat ar! Jake, my ole man, he hired a little cabin down near de piney woods, 'cross de ribber, an' we was a libin' dar, had to pay for de bery roof ober our heads, an' I se tellin' yer no lie! Ole Marse nebbber axed a nigger to pay for his cabin! But we couldn't get nuffin, jest nuffin withouten payin' up Norf! Guess some de niggas dat run Norf arter de war jist gib dar heads offen dar shoulders to git back agin! Dar was Jake, jist a puffed mummy wiv de rheumatiz, an' workin' all day choppin' wood, an' a-groanin' all night. You s'pose Jake like de Norf? Oh, lor!"

"But the bear, Aunt Chloe, and the pig?"

"Sho, now, I se tellin' yer fas' as I kin! De choat, he was de likeliest little grunter eber yer see, all fat, an' squealed like an angel. An' Jake, he perfactured him a sty, Jake did; an' dat choat jes libed on de fat ob de land, 'cause we was a kalkilatin' to kill him fo' Christmas, we was. Don't git no sich Christmas up Norf like de Christmas week down in Georgy. Oh, dem was times, now mind, I tell you!—no work fo' a week, an' plenty hog's meat an' cake, an' de white folks comin' down to de quarters, and new clothes all 'round, an' ole Marse hisself sendin' down sorghum an' bacon—an' all de picanninies wiv candy, an' jes' greasy wiv eatin'. Oh, lor!"

"But the bear, Aunt Chloe?"

"Ain't I tellin' yer fas' as I kin? It was afo' Christmas, an' de snow was on de groun', an' Jake come in late, an' we was havin' supper—slap-jacks. Jake could eat slap-jacks! Hab anoder one; you don't eat more'n a chicken. Well, we was eatin' our supper when dar was a noise outside. Yer nebbber heard de like ob dat noise in all yer born days. Gruntin', squealin', snortin', scrapin', like de bery day of judgmen! I hollered, an' Jake he took up de axe he jes' laid down, an' we open de doo', an' if dar wasn't a bar—a great black bar, bigger'n dan eber ate up de bad chillens in de good book—a walkin' ob with thaten choat—our choat—our Christmas choat. I nebbber knewed afore how our Jake could run—an' dar was de bar an' de life mosten squeeze outen dat choat—jes' nuff lef' to squeal. Oh! how dat ar choat did squeal—like de spirin' bream ob de poo' ting!"

"So you lost your Christmas dinner?"

"Sho now, honey, don't jump head fust at perclussions, like dat ar. Jake, he jes' hollered an run, an' de bar he cocked his eye ober his shoulder an' see de shine ob dat axe, an' he percluded dat expresshun was de bestest part ob taller, an' jes' drop dat choat in de snow, an' made tracks fo' de piney woods! But de choat was a most squealed dry, 'deed now ha was! Took us all night a rubbin' to survive dat choat! Hab anuder slap-jack do! It's mighty curus I nebbber tole you 'bout dat bar afo', honey!"

* The Southern negroes' name for a young pig.

A QUESTION OF LIFE OR DEATH.

BY F. SCARLETT POTTER.

DR. LANCETOWSKI is a man of European reputation; he is one of the most popular and successful medical practitioners of the age; everybody has heard of Dr. Lancetowski. You shake your head, reader. You give me to infer that the name of Lancetowski is not familiar to you. Possibly it is not, but this does not affect my position in the least; for perhaps Lancetowski is not the real name of the distinguished individual of whom I am about to speak. It is, however, by that name alone he will be mentioned in these pages; and it will have two advantages; it will imply the profession of my former friend, and also the fact that he is of Polish descent.

We were chums in our old student days in Paris, and the Doctor, when qualified to practise in his profession, had removed into Germany, to the ancient city which we may call Schwisselburg. When he had been for some time settled there he wrote asking me to join him. I accepted his invitation, and was enraptured with that romantic German town. One of its features especially struck me. The cliffs on which its most elevated part is built rise in a sheer precipice from the river; and at their edge stand the cathedral, the abbey, and the castle; all these splendid structures, being close together, form but one magnificent pile of architecture.

I was in Lancetowski's rooms one evening. We had been silently smoking, when he suddenly said, "I wish I knew of a man in whose nerves and courage I could place implicit reliance."

I confess that I felt hurt at these words. "Have you ever known your old chum to show the white feather when you wanted a friend to stand by you?" I asked.

"No, *mon frère*, I never have, and there is no ordinary difficulty in which I would wish a better man at my side than yourself; but—"

"Well, but what?"

"The circumstances under which I now need help are most exceptional."

"Nevertheless," I replied, "I think that you ought to know that you may rely upon me."

"But before you pledge yourself, learn something of the nature of the help I require. The work I have in hand will not demand simply physical courage. Tell me, would you dare to watch alone in the cathedral from dusk to midnight?"

I laughed. No especial resolution appeared to me to be required for such a vigil. "Provided that there is any sufficient motive for my doing so," I said, "I should be quite prepared to spend the evening there."

"I can make no explanation at the present time," replied my friend, "yet I know that you will accept my assurance that a sufficient motive exists. Think the matter over, and tell me to-morrow if I may rely upon you. If your answer is in the affirmative, contrive to remain in the cathedral after compline to-morrow evening; at midnight I will join you, and you shall then know more."

Of course I did not withdraw my offer on the following day. I really felt exceedingly curious to know the nature of this mysterious business which my friend had in hand. I attended the latest religious ceremonial in the cathedral, and in the dimly-lighted building found no difficulty in concealing myself.

But, when left alone, I found my vigil far less easy and agreeable than I had expected. In the ghostly solitude of the place, as the hours crept slowly on, my nerves grew to a state of unnatural tension. I began to think that midnight would never come, and that I could bear it no longer, when an appearance caught my sight which caused me to give a sudden start. It was a long thin streak of light, which seemed to be creeping along the pavement of the choir from one side to the other. A moment afterwards and I had satisfied myself as to the source from which it proceeded, for a small door opened in the wall near me, and from it two men entered the church. The first of these carried a dark lantern, and it was this light which, shining through a chink, had startled me; the second, who was wrapped in a large blue cloak, was my friend, Dr. Lancetowski.

"I began to think you long in coming," I said.

"I do not doubt it," was his reply, "for I know better than you did three hours ago what a man of your temperament has to go through in such a watch. But now, tell me frankly, are you still resolved to help me in my undertaking? If you feel any desire to decline it, do not shrink from saying as much."

"I have not the least desire to do so," I replied. "I had grown tired of the gloom of this place, nothing more; and I feel perfectly ready to share your adventure, whatever it may be."

"Good," said the Doctor, "we will proceed at once."

"But I am entitled to know something of our errand?"

"Hush!" he answered. "Wait till we are in a place of greater security. We may be overheard here," and he bade his companion lead on. The person with the lantern obeyed. He was a grey-haired man, advanced in years, and I recognised in him the sacristan of the cathedral.

We followed him to the angle of one of the western towers, where he led us down a cork-screw staircase; and at its bottom he unlocked a door which opened into a spacious crypt, the groined roof of which was supported on six massive pillars standing in two rows; whilst all round it ran a range of stone benches.

On one of these a number of articles had been placed, among which I noticed some strong tools, with a collection of scientific apparatus of various kinds. The sacristan, having first locked the door, lighted a large lamp which stood with the other articles, and by its light I was able to observe the dimensions of the crypt.

"What is this place?" I asked of the sacristan.

"In former times, sir, it was used by the canons for holding their secret chapters; but it is rarely visited nowadays. You see I have lighted the large lamp, for we need fear no interruption here."

"Is this the end of our journeying?" I asked of the Doctor.

"By no means. I understand that we have a considerable subterranean ramble before us, but I cannot give you much information on the subject, as all beyond this place will be new to me. Here, my friend, recruit your strength from this flask, and we will proceed. We shall find more leisure for my explanations by and by."

Not unwillingly I accepted his invitation, as did also the sacristan. The Doctor then confided several light articles of his apparatus to my hands, and he himself took up some others and the lamp; whilst the sacristan, shouldering a crowbar and the heavier tools, again went first with his dark lantern.

He unlocked a smaller door than the one by which we had entered, and at the opposite end of the chapter-house; it opened on a somewhat narrow passage, along which we proceeded for about twenty or thirty yards; we then found ourselves at the head of another winding staircase, down which we went. It was of no great length, and at its bottom we entered a circular apartment some ten paces in diameter. Our guide called our attention to the walls of this place. They were not of masonry like those above, but were evidently hewn out of the solid sandstone cliff on which the cathedral and adjacent structures were built.

Into this room, which seemed to have been formed as a kind of

vestibule, there was yet another door; this the sacristan opened, and disclosed a tolerably broad flight of steps, arched overhead, sloping in a straight line far into the darkness below. Down these steps we followed him.

They were fairly easy of descent; but it was a long flight, and we must have descended at least a hundred of them before we reached the bottom. When we had done so I was completely astonished at the dimensions of the apartment into which they brought us. We stood at the end of a long and lofty gallery, which seemed to me, by the light of the lamp, to be scarcely inferior in size to the cathedral itself, and I could distinguish that its roof of rock was hewn into a rude imitation of Gothic groin-work.

We traversed this and two or three other rooms of the same character, though somewhat smaller in size. "What," I asked of my friend, "can have been the object in making these vast excavations, which must have involved enormous labour?"

"Probably," he answered, "they served as quarries for the buildings above; but they had uses of their own. During the troubles of former ages they are said to have been used as retreats, and as storehouses for valuable property; and must then have been looked upon as highly important, though they are now useless and forgotten. Are you growing weary with your underground ramble?"

"By no means; my curiosity is too much excited to permit of it."

"That is well; for, as I understand our conductor, it is in a still deeper range of caverns that our business lies. Yes; here you see we descend again."

"And what," I asked, "may these lower excavations be to which we are going?"

"In former days," replied Lancetowski, "they were the burying-places of all the chief families of the district; but they have not been used for that purpose for something like a century and a half."

This flight of steps brought us to a succession of passages, in one of which our guide paused, and bidding us beware, showed us an opening in the floor which appeared to stretch much farther downwards than the rays of our lamp would illuminate. He threw a stone into the aperture, and for some seconds we heard it bounding from side to side, and at last there came a faint splash, as it fell apparently into water at a vast distance beneath us.

"It is a well," said the sacristan. "It is said to be sunk below the bed of the river. My father has told me that in the old times, when people took refuge in the caves, this well supplied them with water."

After this we passed along a passage for no great distance, and stopped before an iron door in its side.

"We have reached it at last, Herr Doctor," said the old man; and he pointed to an inscription over the doorway: "This is the burying-place of the Barons von Puffenhardt."

We entered. It was an excavation not less than thirty feet in length. All round it ran a sort of stone platform, and on this lay many heavy coffins, some separately, others piled together. The aged sacristan walked round and turned the light of the lamp on them. At length he placed his hand upon one which lay by itself.

"This," he said, "Herr Lancetowski, is the one you have need of. I will now fetch all the other things that you require;" and setting down the lamp, and taking up his dark lantern, he left us.

"And now," I said, as soon as we were alone, "in the name of all that is mysterious, tell me what you are going to do?"

"Exactly," replied Lancetowski. "Let us sit down;" and he seated himself on a part of the stone platform which was free from the remains of mediæval humanity, whilst I took my place by his side.

"I must tell you," he began, "that almost ever since I have been settled in this town I have been working on a line of research which many men would be inclined to laugh at. I have been seeking the absolute principle of life. I have brought all my scientific acumen to bear upon the subject, and have at last solved the problem. I, first of mankind, have learnt this grand secret, and more than this I have mastered its practical side; give me a body in which life is extinct, and I can reanimate it."

I did not attempt to disguise my incredulity. "If so," I said, "your patients can never need to fear death."

"I see that you do not properly understand me. People generally die from diseases which unfit the body to retain that subtle fluid which we call 'life.' I have discovered the nature of that fluid, and can again infuse it into the bodies of any who die; but if the body is no longer capable of containing it, my process would be applied to it in vain. Again, even in the few instances in which the body is left unimpaired, decomposition in a few hours sets in, the organs are unfitted to perform their functions, and the frame is rendered incapable of being the abode of the vital principle. You see now how rarely my discovery can be made of practical importance."

"I do." But now tell me in what way is our present expedition connected with this discovery of yours?"

"To that I am coming. Did you ever meet with the story of the Baron Gruffmann von Poffenhardt?"

"No—yes. I must have read it in one of the older guide-books. Of course—Von Poffenhardt of Castle Wessandstop—he was suffocated in his bed, was he not, by his own servants, at the instigation of his baroness? I remember it well now. It is a tragic story; one of the fellows confessed on his death-bed. His accomplice was broken on the wheel, and the lady beheaded."

"Those were the circumstances," replied Lancetowski. "Well, he was buried in great haste with his ancestors in this vault. Now, you must know that the excavations in these rocks have a remarkable property, which they share with various similar ones in different parts of the world—the bodies deposited in them never suffer from decomposition. This is in some degree owing to the absence of moisture, and in some degree to a peculiar gas which emanates from the sandstone. Those buried here simply become dried—they undergo no other change. Now, this night I propose, with your help, to make my grand experiment. So far as I am aware, there is no reason why I should not restore the murdered Baron to life and health again. When I shall have resuscitated and given back to the world a man who has been absent from it for three centuries, I imagine that I shall be in a position to silence all opponents."

"And you have relied upon me for being your assistant in this?"

"I have, and the nature of the undertaking will explain my motives for putting your resolution to so severe a test. You will understand now how it would have been folly for me to have asked the assistance of any person upon whom I could not place the most implicit reliance."

"Yes, I am perfectly satisfied. Is the sacristan also in your confidence?"

"No. He knows that I desire to make some professional examination of the murdered Baron's body. He is handsomely paid to be silent and to point it out to me, which last duty he is well qualified to perform, for his office has been hereditary for many generations."

As Lancetowski finished the old man came back with his load, and then carried in two or three heavy vessels filled with water,

which also had been previously conveyed to the upper excavations. Having done this, he inquired if his further presence were needed, handed the keys to my friend, and withdrew.

He closed the door of the vault behind him, and the Doctor rose and locked it from within. "Now then," he said, "we shall be secure from all intruders. Let us to work."

With the crowbar and other tools we forced off the heavy oaken lid of the coffin. The body was closely shrouded in what appeared to be a linen sheet, which, though brown with age, still resisted our efforts to tear it. We had to cut it away, and, that done, there lay the Baron von Puffenhardt before us, perfect indeed in every limb and feature, but wasted and shrivelled till he bore about as much resemblance to a man as a Normandy pippin may do to an apple.

The Doctor placed one of the vessels near the body, and poured into it the contents of one of his bottles. He then produced an instrument, which would blow fluids into a fine spray, and with this he began to throw the contents of the vessel over the different parts of the body. This process we continued by turns for upwards of an hour.

It was strange to watch how the rigid, dry, and shrivelled limbs gradually relaxed and became soft and plump under this treatment; and still stranger to watch the change of the features. Except for the well-trimmed beard, and short, brown, curly hair, the face might have either been that of an old man or an old woman on the last verge of life; but, as the fluid penetrated the muscles, the visage slowly developed itself into that of a handsome determined-looking man of some forty years. The Baron von Puffenhardt must have been a fine fellow in his day.

"So far so good," exclaimed Lancetowski when we had attained this result. "That which has next to be done I can do alone, and you are much in want of rest. Try if you can go to sleep for half an hour; I will rouse you when I want help."

I obeyed him, and, wearied as I was, presently sank into a deep sleep.

I was roused by Lancetowski shaking me by the shoulder.

"Quick," he cried, "now is the time; you must help me at once!"

Thus suddenly awakened I was unable for a moment to realise the strange scene around me. "Am I still dreaming?" I asked.

"No; you are, and must be, wide awake. Lend me a hand instantly. Every moment is of consequence at this stage of our work. A few minutes' delay may ruin everything."

He had a curious instrument in his hand, of which the most striking feature was a large elastic bag, filled evidently with some kind of gas. To this there was attached a sort of mouth-piece, which he fitted closely over the Baron's mouth, and having closed the nostrils with his thumb and finger, he directed me to press the bag. This inflated the lungs. Then he loosed the nose, and forced the inhaled gas from the chest by external pressure. We kept up this artificial respiration for some ten minutes, at the end of which time the Doctor told me that I must carry it on without his help, but that it must on no account be allowed to stop.

In readiness he had an apparatus which looked to me like some unusual kind of galvanic battery. One wire from this he connected with the spine of his subject, and the other with the forehead. No sooner was the connection made than I felt a kind of tremor pass through the body of the Baron, which so startled me as almost to cause me to relax my exertions; but a warning exclamation from the Doctor recalled me to the necessity of continuing them. The tremor increased. I saw a smile of satisfaction pass over Lancetowski's face. "Remove the instrument," he cried, "and stand back."

As I obeyed him I noticed a spasmodic movement of all the muscles. The hands and features twitched; then the legs were drawn up and down as if in pain; and a second afterwards the silence of the vault was broken by an audible groan.

Lancetowski's great discovery was then no hallucination of his, but a thing proved! The Baron was alive again! He slowly opened his eyes, raised himself to a sitting posture, and looked round with an expression of the greatest bewilderment.

"That accursed woman must have drugged my wine," he said, presently, in a thick voice, and drawing his hand across his brow. "I am confused by it still; or else this is all a horrible dream."

He spoke in so obsolete a dialect that, though I consider myself a good German scholar, it was with difficulty I understood him. Neither of us made any answer, but Lancetowski stepped forward and threw his large cloak over the Baron's shoulders.

This action seemed to bring him more thoroughly to himself. "Who are you, fellow?" he demanded, in a sharp, haughty voice.

"Patience, Herr von Puffenhardt; I am a physician, and you are under my charge."

"A foreigner, by his outlandish dress and tongue. Some scoundrel of a leech whom my precious Baroness has hired to poison me, I suppose." And then, as he cast a glance round the vault: "What does this mean? Do they dare to tax me with madness, that I am brought to this dungeon? It is a lie, I say—a conspiracy; there is not a saner man in the Empire!"

"Patience, Herr Baron; again I entreat you to be patient. You are unwell, and for your own sake must be calm. I will explain everything to you in due time."

"Patience! you hound. Whilst I am here stripped and in a dungeon? If this be my wife's doing, she shall smart for it, and so shall you, her accomplices. Ho! Max and Carl. Ho! there, fellows!"

And calling to his followers for help, the Baron suddenly sprang up and seized the crowbar which lay near at hand. Our first impulse was to save ourselves from his fury, and both of us made a rush for the door. It was near being unfortunate for us that Lancetowski had locked it. The key was left in, but in my haste I turned it the wrong way, and our exit was effectually barred.

But the Baron's fury was of short duration. As he attempted to follow us he reeled and fell; and our momentary alarm over, we hastened to his side. He appeared to have fainted. The Doctor felt his pulse. "Ah!" he said, "his will and temper are, you see, as powerful as ever; but he has at present little or no physical strength. This fit, however, is nothing; he will soon be round again."

My friend was right. In a few minutes the patient opened his eyes.

"Herr Baron," said the Doctor, "though you are unwilling to admit it, you must now know how ill and weak you are. As your physician, I warn you not to agitate yourself."

Von Puffenhardt uttered some sound between a sigh and a groan. "You are right, worthy Master Leech, you are right; I feel my weakness now. I must have been ill and unconscious. I will obey you: only say what has been the matter, and how I came into this strange place."

"You shall hear all about it in due time, but first you must tell me if you can remember anything that has taken place."

"I—I remember nothing, except that my wine took an unusual effect on me last night, and that I had an ugly dream; I thought that my two honest fellows, Max and Carl, were suffocating me with the pillows."

"Then listen, Baron; that fancy of yours was no dream, but the reality."





"What! Do you say that the ungrateful dogs actually attempted to murder me? By the soul of the Kaiser! they shall hang for it."

"They have already received their punishment, and so has your faithless Baroness, their instigator; whilst you have been carried in your coffin to this vault—the burying-place of your family."

"How, man! I do not comprehend you. Nay, but I see it. They laid me here for dead, and you, being a cunning leech, knew better, and have come hither to bring me to myself again. You have been my friend. Think not of the fright I gave you; you shall be well rewarded. How many hours have I been lying here?"

"Noble Baron, you have been in this vault some three hundred years."

"Silence, fellow!" cried Von Puffenhardt, throwing himself forward, and speaking with much of his former fierceness. "Do you take me for a fool that you dare to tell such lies in my presence? Presume not to jest with me, or I will have you soundly punished."

But the Baron's voice quivered at the last words, and it was plain he would not again be able to resort to violence; so the Doctor answered him quietly. "However strange this may seem to you, I am uttering nothing more than the sober truth, as my friend here can bear me witness. Your threats of punishment, poor Baron, are idle now. Your order, and much more, yourself, have lost their former power. This is the nineteenth century, and the world has greatly changed since your day."

"I will not believe it," cried the other in a still excited though feeble voice. "Who ever heard such a story? Show me proof!"

"Be calm," replied Lancetowski. "I know perfectly well how improbable this must appear to you. You ask for proofs; look round you. Examine my dress and that of my friend. Did you ever see anything approaching the fashion of them in your own times. Consider this vault, where lie the coffins of your contemporaries and immediate predecessors; you may see that the stains and the dust of ages are upon them. Look at these instruments of mine, at this lamp: they all show a mechanical knowledge and skill of which your day was ignorant. Look at this," and Lancetowski took up a copy of the *Schwisselburg* newspaper, in which some of his apparatus had been wrapped; "here you may see printed the date of yesterday, with records of political and social events of an order of which you can have but little conception."

Gruffmann von Puffenhardt sat silent under this harangue, and took the paper in his hand like a man in a dream. I should say, from the way in which he handled it, that in his earlier years the Baron could not have had a very learned education. Doubtless, too, the type, spelling, and diction were so different from those of his own age as to make his native language look strange to him. In any case it took him many minutes to spell through a few paragraphs of the "Latest Intelligence." He laid it down with a look of hopeless bewilderment. "What is it all about?" he asked. "What do they mean by 'Electric Cable'?" I suppose it must be as you say, yet it seems impossible. Three hundred years!"

"Science," said the Doctor, "has made some strides in that time, or I should never have been able to restore you to life."

"Well, well, no doubt you have done your best to serve me; and shall not lose your reward. We will leave this place, and you shall come with me to my Castle of Wessandstop."

As Lancetowski was silent I took up the conversation. Whilst looking up the matters of interest in the neighbourhood, on my first arrival at Schwisselburg, I had read an account in an old topographical work of the picturesque ruins of Wessandstop, and had gone thither for the purpose of sketching. But I was disappointed. I found that a populous manufacturing village had sprung up on the spot, and that the old walls had some years since been pulled down to make room for an enormous lucifer-match factory. This I communicated us briefly as I could to the Baron.

In spite of his weakness he turned sharply and fiercely on me. "It is false," he cried. "Wessandstop has been the home and stronghold of our illustrious family from the days of Charlemagne—no base mechanic would have dared to lay a finger on the walls—there lives not a noble rider of the house of Puffenhardt who would not have breathed his last before he would have suffered the castle of his ancestors to be destroyed."

"It is quite possible, Baron," answered Lancetowski, "that the Puffenhardts may have had all that affection for their ancestral seat of which you speak, but this could be no protection to its ruined walls in our day, since it is matter of history that the family became extinct about the year 1690."

The expression of anger on the face of Von Puffenhardt gave place to one of sadness. "Yet our lands," he said, "our broad lands, that were granted to us by emperors—they still remain? I shall see my chaise again, that I loved so well, with its spreading beeches?"

"In the account I read of the castle," I replied, "there was also mention made of the sylvan beauties of the chase at Wessandstop; so when I was upon the spot I took the trouble to make some inquiries respecting it. I learnt that the last of the ancient beeches had not been cut down till within the memory of some old persons, though no traces of it are now to be seen: part of its site is built over, and the remainder is under tillage."

"And," continued the Doctor, "I imagine that the lands of your family have been so many times sold and subdivided, that you would now find it equally impossible to make out their boundaries and to recognise their features."

It was piteous to watch the Baron's face as he realised these truths. He seemed quite subdued and crushed now. Presently he asked, "And is all the world changed as much as Wessandstop?"

"You will not know it again. Railways and steamships, and telegraphs and newspapers, and modern thought and progress have changed almost everything since your day," and Lancetowski, quite unnecessarily as I thought, proceeded to give his patient a great deal of information on the present state of the world, social, political, and otherwise. As he talked on, the look of dejection on the poor Baron's face grew deeper and deeper, and before the harangue was finished he sank back apparently quite overcome and exhausted. For some time he said nothing, except that once I heard him murmuring to himself, "What shall I do? Where shall I go?"

After a while, however, he roused himself, and again sitting up began to speak with considerable energy. "You tell me that my family is extinct, my castle destroyed, my lands lost and alienated; that the whole world and course of human life are changed—there is no living being left in the world that could by any chance care for me, nor is there anything left for which I could care. What have I to do among mankind? What right have you to bring me back among them?"

"Life," answered the Doctor, "in all ages is sweet. In restoring life to you I have given you the most precious of all boons."

"Life!" echoed the Baron. "For what do you take me? For a base pebeian like yourselves, that I should set such a value on mere empty life? I, who am a noble of the Holy Roman Empire, can care nothing for existence without honour, and place, and power, which are my rights in the world—without them life is far worse than worthless; and can you give these to me again? You know that you cannot. And, apart from this,

what can life be to one who must be wholly alone? There will be no man that can sympathise with me; my manners, habits, speech, my very thoughts, will all be out of date. I should be but a thing for boys to mock at. Oh! where shall I find a place? Shall I go into the world and proclaim myself the Baron von Puffenhardt? You know I cannot. I should only be scouted as an impostor or a madman. And now, knowing all this, how dared you to do me such wrong as to bring me back to life? What right had you to disturb my peaceful slumbers with my kindred dust?"

"Gently, gently," said Lancetowski. "You must not talk in this manner. Come with us, we will lead you from this gloomy place, and in the cheerful light of day you will be more calm, more rational. Come."

"Never. Three hundred years lie between me and my proper place and generation—they separate me from all the pleasures, and rights, and hopes that made up my life, and I will not go forth into a world that could only be a more gloomy and dreary tomb than this. If you have one touch of justice or kindly feeling in your hearts, I entreat you to take again the life you have given, and to leave me here in peace among those with whom alone I can have any fellowship."

"That cannot be," said the Doctor, and I added, "We cannot murder you. Be ruled, come with us."

Nothing but despair and aversion were to be seen on the face of the unhappy Baron as he turned from us.

"What is to be done?" I asked in French.

"We must not leave him here," was the answer in the same language. "We must compel him to come to my house, or at least, first of all, to one of the upper galleries, where we may furnish him with proper clothes. Open the door; I will help him to rise."

I endeavoured to do as my friend desired, but after being turned the wrong way it was no easy matter to force the key through the rusted lock. I was busied in doing so when I heard a sudden exclamation from Lancetowski, a heavy fall, and a groan. I turned round. The Baron lay along the floor, and in his side was plunged the sharp-pointed knife which had been lying beside the other instruments.

"He has done it effectually this time," said the Doctor, as he examined the wound. "It has entered the heart, and not even my skill can avail him. Gracious heavens! That it should have come to this!" In spite of his professional calmness, he seemed no less overwhelmed than myself.

For perhaps ten minutes, though it seemed a much longer time, we remained unable to do or to resolve on anything. At last we determined to replace the body in its coffin, and to restore it to its former resting-place. When this had been done, Lancetowski spread out his blood-stained cloak on the floor and began to fling into it all his bottles and apparatus in a confused heap.

"Have a care," said I.

"No matter," was the answer, "let them break as they will," and he drew the cloak together by its corners. I took up the lamp and tools, and went first: he followed with his load, and locked the door. We went on in silence till we reached the deep pit or well, before spoken of, when he called to me to stop. I did so. He laid down his bundle, and opening one corner threw into it the massive antique key, which closed the sepulchral chamber of the Von Puffenhardts; then he tightly knotted up the cloak.

"What are you about to do?" I asked.

"To send the key of yonder hateful vault, with everything used in this accursed business, where no human eye will ever look upon them again—so," and he dropped the cloak with its contents down the black abyss.

"There," he said, when the dull distant splash told that it had reached the bottom—"there, let all that rubbish lie till doomsday. I shall never need it again; for after this night's experiences I make a solemn vow that I will never again in this manner tamper with the sacred laws of nature."

When I had regained my lodgings I fairly broke down, and for some weeks I lay ill there; whilst during the greater part of that time Lancetowski himself was in too shattered a state to be able to attend me. After I had begun to recover he paid me a few visits, but we found that our meetings no longer brought their old pleasure to either of us, and only served to recall the horrors through which we had passed on that dreadful night.

As soon as I was well enough to be moved I left Schwisselburg, and never afterwards returned to it. Lancetowski and I exchanged two or three letters; and then, as if by mutual consent, ceased to correspond; thus it was that our friendship came to an end. From the great success that he has achieved in other fields I feel sure that the vow he made that morning in my presence has been religiously kept.

BRIGHAM YOUNG AND THE GOAT.

BY HOWARD PAUL.

SYDNEY SMITH'S observation about alluding disrespectfully to the equator, springs to my mind when I am compelled to speak the opposite of reverential of a prophet who was also a seer and revelator to boot. I mean the late Brigham Young, of Salt Lake City, State of Utah, U.S. America. A prophet is supposed to be a superior sort of person (sporting prophets perhaps excepted), and if Mr. Young did not particularly admire mankind, there can be no doubt in regard to his feelings as far as womankind is concerned. Witness his ample and extended nuptial roll, to say nothing of his forty-six recognised sons and daughters living in and about Salt Lake City, and utterly ignoring, except by the gentlest of hints, various progeny scattered up and down the State of Utah, the result of his staring expeditions to the provinces when he went forth with his little band of erotic apostles to strengthen the faith of wavering converts to Mormon principles.

One fact is undoubted. He found the site of the city a howling wilderness, and left it to blossom like the rose. Great credit is due to the old seer for this advancement, for he found time to have a hand in every projected enterprise. He laid out the city, planned the Tabernacle, Temple, and public offices, and curiously enough opened a theatre and managed it himself. And a very good theatre it is too, as large as the London Adelphi, with excellent accommodation before and behind the curtain. In the early days, before the opening of the Pacific Railway, and before travelling dramatic companies called at Salt Lake City en route to San Francisco, the plays represented were acted by the Mormons themselves, and in looking over a file of old bills, which, by the way, were about the size of half-sheets of note-paper, I found the *Lady of Lyons* and *Box and Cox* incessantly to the fore, the female rôles being impersonated by men. Brigham's "head was level," as the Yankees say, on one point: his followers must be provided with amusement, and the theatre was a convenient and interesting form. When the colonists got going a bit, and matters had settled down into proper working order, balls and hops grew into favour, and the Mormons decidedly are the dancingest and playgoings people I ever visited. One of Brigham's daughters was the first actress who ever appeared on the boards of the Salt Lake Theatre, and three years ago two of his grand-daughters were members of the stock company. The manager of the theatre, Mr. Hiram Clawson, had four wives, two

of whom were the Prophet's daughters, and his children were engaged about the theatre in various capacities—one of his sons, "Johnny," a bright lad, acting as call-boy.

Brigham Young employed his theatre as a medium for the introduction of "ideas." By an astute system of neat interpolation he would write in speeches that had little to do with the play represented, but which advocated his particular views. At one time the introduction of goats into the city occupied much of his attention. Somehow his people kicked against this sagacious animal. Horses, cows, sheep, pigs, dogs, and cats were all very well, but they felt they could get along nicely without goats. It was part of Brigham's policy not to be defeated in small things. He argued that if his followers "headed him off" in minor matters they would want their way in major concerns. He did not approve of the thin edge of the wedge. At conferences, at caucuses, at council meetings he talked goat to his flock, but there was a languid response. In vain he cracked up the ornate personal appearance of a fine goat, its frugal habits, its intelligence, and its miraculous powers of digestion. He went so far as to proclaim it "a noble animal," a phrase that has been rather monopolised by the horse. He protested that its milk was a valuable article of diet, and that, properly cooked, its flesh resembled high-class veal. The old Prophet clearly had goat on the brain. One would have thought that an animal with such an accommodating appetite would have been a favourite with the poorer class of Mormons, for it is a well-ascertained fact that a vigorous goat can eat tin-cans, hoop-skirts, boarding-house steaks, old boots, German sausage, and other delicacies of the season. Besides, it is not affected by deadly substances. Strychnine and arsenic are nothing more than rich spices, and have no other effect than that of stimulating its appetite. Despite these constitutional advantages, goat did not go down with the Latter Day Saints.

Then Brigham thought of the theatre, and opined that a sentimental interest in the animal might be cultivated. The drama of *Esmeralda* was put in rehearsal. A large, handsome, healthy he-goat was procured, went into active training, and seemed amenable to dramatic tuition. Brigham himself looked after the rehearsal, especially the scenes where the goat appeared. He interpolated an episode to illustrate the affectionate docility of the creature. *Esmeralda* walked pensively round the stage, and he proposed that the goat should amble by her side, and now and again rub his head against her dress, and, if possible, look up into her eyes. The goat being an amateur, and new to the stage, did not rapidly fall into the Prophet's ideas, and turned so rusty and pugnacious that the lady who played *Esmeralda* despaired of producing the desired effect. Brigham, instead of reproaching the goat, rather snubbed the actress, which made a bother all around. He undertook to show her how the business might be managed. Procuring a huge bunch of greens, he preceded the goat, which followed him promptly, but resolutely declined to rub his head against the legs or gaze upward. He kept his eyes steadily on the greens, and when they were finished stood stock still. In vain Brigham coaxed, and flattered, and caressed. The goat, getting tired of the whole business, began to sulk and sigh for the open air. The Prophet was beginning to lose his serenity of mind, and gave the quadruped a gentle tap with his cane to animate him. The goat instantly resented this as a bitter insult, and "went for" the Prophet, who, in his surprise, accidentally dropped his cane. In stooping to pick it up the goat saw his advantage in the majestic breadth of person presented to his infuriated gaze, and, making a sudden and savage rush, butted the Prophet clean into the orchestra, where he fell into the big drum, sent a trombone flying into the air, and frightened two or three of the fiddlers out of their seven senses. The goat then calmly walked up the stage with the triumphant air of a star artiste who had brought down the house in his great scene.

Brigham, happily, was not injured, but he was indignant. It was clear that goats were ungrateful. After picking himself up, and giving himself time to recover his self-possession, he returned to the stage. There was mischief in the eye of the animal, for no sooner did the Prophet, his face as red as the edges of boiled beef, approach him than he made a fearful plunge at him which bent him double. Brigham, it will be remembered, was a somewhat globular person, and his summit was almost as high above the level of the sea when prostrate as when standing erect. The protuberance bothered the goat. Previous experience had taught him that when he had butted a man efficiently his enemy's perpendicular height was materially diminished, and the intelligent animal was not unnaturally puzzled when the form of the burly Brigham reared itself defiantly above him. The consequence was that the goat, now that his blood was well up, proceeded to administer a series of healthy and well-directed butts in various parts of the pulpy person of Brigham, and the chances are that he would have kept on butting till the present moment if a brace of comedians had not interfered and dragged the animal bodily out of the theatre. The old Seer and Revelator made his way wearily home after this ignoble conflict, and a liberal application of amica and consolation by half-a-dozen wives soon brought him round. The thought must have struck him that it was easier to manage masses of men than to train a single goat. *Esmeralda* was quietly withdrawn, and the subject of extending goats in Utah was never again suggested.

"ONE GOOD TURN DESERVES ANOTHER."

THE venerable old adage of "Handsome is as handsome does" met with a somewhat new reading the other evening by our friend and considerable "pitcher," Tom Brown, who, having called for a glass of bitter at the Magpie and Stump, tendered in payment a new-looking half-crown, which was the only piece of current coin in his possession. He was just in the act of quaffing the liquor when he was stopped by the barmaid, who pronounced the money to be "a right down bad 'un."

"Well, this is a go," said Tom, "it really is too bad. I haven't another fraction with me."

"Yes, it's too bad for us," said the girl, returning the coin with one hand, while she regained the glass with the other.

Luckily Brown was known by sight at the Magpie and Stump, and the loss of the beer was the only inconvenience he experienced, and, after invoking an immense number of strangely sounding blessings on the head of the unknown person who had given him the counterfeit coin, he started homewards.

Unfortunately, the night, like the half-crown, was a very bad one; the rain was coming down in torrents. As he gained the street a hansom passed plying for a job. In an instant Tom rose to the situation.

"One good turn deserves another," mused he, and he turned into the cab.

On arriving at his destination, barely two miles, he gave the caddy the rejected piece of silver, asking him for a shilling change, which having been handed to him by the unsuspecting Jehu, he repaired to a neighbouring tavern to indulge in the much wanted bitter of which he had been previously disappointed.

The order was given and executed, and for the second time he was about to quench his thirst, when, horror upon horror, he was stopped by the barman. *The shilling he had just received from the cabman was a bad one too.*

“THE FLYING DUTCHMAN.”

(A Sequel to the Opera.)

ACT IV.—ADDED BY HENRY HERSEE.

IN Richard Wagner's three-act opera, *Der Fliegende Holländer*, Angliç, *The Flying Dutchman*, the chief personages are Captain Vanderdecken (the real original Flying Dutchman); Senta, a Norwegian maiden; Eric, a young hunter; and Daland, the father of Senta. The Dutchman—doomed to combat with ocean tempests throughout eternity, because he had been guilty of the unseamanlike offence of using bad language (!) when off the Cape of Good Hope—can only obtain release from his torments by gaining the love of a woman “faithful unto death,” and he is allowed to visit land every seventh year in search of this paragon. He finds her in Senta, whose capacity of being “faithful unto death” is exhibited in her treatment of her betrothed lover, Eric. She jilts that luckless youth in the most hard-hearted manner, for the sake of saving the Dutchman. The third act concludes with the sinking of the Dutchman's ship, and the suicide of Senta, who throws herself into the ocean.

ACT IV.

SCENE: *The public parlour of the “Vanderdecken's Head,” at the port of Wagnerheim, on the coast of Rosacarla. Longitude uncertain; latitude, very wide. At the rising of the curtain LORD WILLIAM SMITH, an English tourist, and Mr. CAMERA COLLODION, a photographer, are discovered.*

LORD SMITH.—Awfully glad to meet you. So you have come all this distance for the sake of photographing the Flying Dutchman?

COLLODION.—Yes, my lord. The London market is overstocked with portraits of lovely women, and of women who think themselves lovely. The shop-boys have covered the walls of their garrets with the *cartes de visite* of female aristocrats; and photographers can no longer afford to pay 2d. a copy royalty to anyone less exalted than a duchess. We want startling novelties, and Captain Vanderdecken's portrait is sure to sell.

LORD SMITH.—His miraculous escape from drowning, ten years ago, made a great sensation. Here he comes.

(Enter VANDERDECKEN. “Boom! boom! boom!” from the orchestra.)

LORD SMITH.—What means that row?

VAN.—That's my “leit motive.” Don't make light of it.

COLL.—Captain, before I depart, have I your permission to take a portrait of the lovely Senta—I mean Mrs. Vanderdecken?

VAN.—Yes; if you can persuade her; but she's in bad—

COLL.—Not bad health?

VAN.—Bad temper. Says I drink too much of the stock, and lays down the law about the profits. When I ask for “schnaps,” she snaps at me. I fear my frau, although I am no coward.

LORD SMITH.—Middle-aged frowns are generally froward.

COLL.—The sun shines brightly. I hope to take a splendid negative of her.

VAN.—I've taken negatives from her—all the morning. You will find her in the bar. [Exit COLLODION.]

LORD SMITH.—Captain, I long to hear the tale of your escape from drowning?

VAN. (suspiciously).—You are not a special correspondent?

LORD SMITH.—No.

VAN.—Nor an American interviewer?

LORD SMITH.—No; a bona-fide traveller.

VAN.—My tale is briefly told. When I went on board of my ship, at the end of the third act, I put on a Boyton suit, and provided myself with half a hundredweight of Liebig's Extractum Carnis, twenty tins of compressed Swiss milk, and a spare Boyton dress for Senta, who swam like a fish until we met. The little duck was none the worse for her ducking, and soon donned her Boyton suit. For fifteen weeks we floated on the sea, singing endless melodies in C major on the chord of the 37th, and at last we drifted into this port of Wagnerheim. The local Barnum offered splendid terms; we were shown round the country as a real live merman and his mermaid, and saved enough money to buy the lease of this public-house.

LORD SMITH.—Were you not recognised?

VAN.—Alas! yes. My prosy old father-in-law, Captain Daland, came here with his ship; came to our bar for drink; recognised Senta and myself at once; struck an attitude, and denounced us to the customers, in a recitative which lasted forty minutes.

LORD SMITH.—Your business was ruined?

VAN.—Not at all. The news spread like wildfire. The bar was thronged all day; tourists came from all parts of the world to hear my wondrous tale, and to take something “for the good of the house.” In order to keep pace with the demands for locks of our hair, we were obliged to put on three fresh wigs every day, and the sign of the house—formerly known as “The Octopus”—was changed to “The Vanderdecken's Head.” We have made money; and still I am not happy. My wife has a deuce of a temper.

LORD SMITH. (sighing).—I am a married man.

VAN. (sighing).—Then we sympathise. My plan is, to mollify my frau by professing passionate love for her. I—that is—I dissemble. Try my plan!

LORD SMITH. (sighing).—You have touched a chord—pray excuse me? [Exit, sighing.]

VAN. (solus).—I should like a pipe, if my wife would let me have a moment's peace. But, soft, I scent a Senta in the air. She comes!

(Enter SENTA, at centre door.)

VAN.—Welcome, sweet wife. Heaven sent a boon, indeed, when it sent a Senta to these arms!

SEN.—Dis Senta don't dissent at all from that remark.

VAN.—I was about to smoke the pipe of peace.

SEN.—Were you? (Breaks his pipe in half.) There! Now you may smoke a piece of pipe.

VAN.—My darling; am I not master here?

SEN.—What? What? What? (Tears out a handful of his whiskers.) You master, eh?

VAN.—My darling, I love to see you in a playful mood; but would rather you practised hair-dressing on our poodle. (Combs the remains of his whiskers.)

SEN.—Go, and mind the bar. The English photographer wants to take my portrait.

VAN.—I have given him my permission.

SEN.—Have you? I have given mine, which is much more to the purpose. Be off. He is coming here, with his apparatus.

VAN.—I object to leaving you alone with him, sweetest.

SEN.—Do you? (Flies at him and scratches his face.) Be off at once, or I shall lose my temper!

VAN. (meekly).—I'm going, love. Lively little darling! [Exit.]

(Enter COLLODION, with apparatus.)

COLL.—Dearest madam, you must fix your glance on me. Let me first arrange your hands. (Takes her hand in his.) What lovely hands! (Kisses them.) Forgive me! Your beauty bewilders me. (Puts his head under curtain of camera.)

SEN. (aside).—What enchanting manners these London photographers have! Are they all like him, I wonder?

COLL.—Ah, madam, Captain Vanderdecken is indeed to be envied! Yet do you not sometimes think of your first lover, Eric?

SEN.—Think of him sometimes? I think of him always. I adore him! And often, when alone, I call to him fondly, “Eric! Eric!”

COLL.—You do? Then, in Cockney phrase, “ere e' comes!” (Tears off his false beard and whiskers.) Behold your faithful Eric!

SEN.—Eric! (Rushes into his arms. They embrace.)

ERIC.—Senta! My Senta! “Faithful unto death.” For ten weary years I have looked forward to this day. I sold my farm, went to London, learned the intricate art of photography, made profitable commercial arrangements with fashionable beauties, and became rich—rich, my Senta!

SEN.—(Aside) Rich! (aloud) Eric, I love thee!

ERIC.—Be mine! Fly with me to London. If I remember rightly, you were not married to the Dutchman?

SEN.—Of course not.

ERIC.—Then fly with me, and let the Flying Dutchman catch us if he can. We will be married at St. George's, Hanover Square, by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and my young men shall photograph the bride and bridesmaids. Your portrait shall be seen in every street, and every London gent will buy a likeness of “the beautiful Mrs. Collodion.” You shall be taken in riding-dress, walking-dress, in a high dress, in a very, very low dress, swinging in a hammock, climbing a ladder—in all sorts of poses. Your box at the opera shall be thronged with noble admirers; earls shall fight for the privilege of putting your shawl around those lovely shoulders; dukes shall give you diamond bracelets for each of your gloves; and your faithful Eric, alias Collodion, will give you, for pin-money, the regular 2d. a copy royalty.

SEN.—These temptations are irresistible. But how are we to escape?

COLL.—My clipper steam yacht is ready; steam up! Let us fly together! (They fly together.)

(Descriptive orchestral music, during which LORD SMITH enters. He seats himself, and tries to beat time to the music. As nobody is looking he falls asleep. Twenty minutes later, he is awakened by a grand orchestral crash, assisted by 35 trombones, 75 drums, and a triangle.)

LORD SMITH.—Bravo! Bravo! Splendid! Talk of Mozart, and Beethoven, and Mendelssohn! Why, they are not fit to—

(Enter DALAND, breathless.)

DALAND.—Where is my son-in-law?

LORD SMITH.—How the deuce should I know? Who is your son-in-law?

DALAND.—The licensed victualler who keeps this house. (Shouting.) Vanderdecken! Captain Vanderdecken!

(Enter VANDERDECKEN. “Boom! Boom! Boom!” from the orchestra.)

VAN.—What is the matter?

DALAND.—Alas, alas! I bring you fearful tidings. You have been cruelly betrayed and deserted. The London photographer was Eric, in disguise! He hailed me from his steam yacht; Senta was standing by his side. They bade me tell you that they are off to England. Senta begs you will not be anxious on her account. She is quite safe, and so is the cash-box, which she has taken with her.

VAN.—And do you mean to say that she has deserted me for that pitiful Eric, who was always howling out his complaints to her, instead of pitching into me, like a man?

LORD SMITH.—What could you expect?

“On revient toujours à ses premiers amours!”

VAN.—Just so; I don't understand Greek. But, shall I never, never, see her more?

DALAND.—Alas, never more!

(VANDERDECKEN folds his arms, dances the Sailor's Hornpipe, cuts six, throws a double summersault, and strikes an attitude.)

VAN.—Hooray! Hoo—ray! I'll stand drinks for the company! (Dances a cellar-flap.) My whiskers will henceforth be safe, and I'll be “drunk on the premises” as often as I please. Business will flourish. Crowds of inquisitive tourists will flock hither, to learn the “latest particulars” of my mel—ha! ha!—my melancholy story.

And thus, my friends, “The Vanderdecken's Head” Shall thrive—upon The Vanderdecken's Tale!

CURTAIN.

FRIGHTED WITH FALSE FIRE.

AN OLD CORNISH CHRISTMAS STORY, FOUNDED UPON FACTS.

BY A. H. WALL.

CHAPTER I.

THE time was full of dismay and trouble, and the place, England, was as a ship on a tempestuous sea, with never a hope outside its own fragile creaking planks. Above, below, and around, spread darkness and horrible threatenings. There was anarchy in Scotland, where French agents were striving mischievously against England. In France there was civil war—of all wars the most horrible. Germany was steeped to the lips in vice and misery; Italy, Portugal, and the Netherlands languished in the iron grip of Europe's terror—Spain, which was then the great dominant power of the world, haughty, wealthy, treacherous, cruel, and unscrupulous. In every city, court, and country, the disguised agents of Spain were at their secret work. They fanned into a fiercer heat the fast-spreading flames of rebellion in Ireland, where castles, churches, and villages stood empty and desolate, blackened with fire and stained with blood in the midst of uncultivated fields, wherein the bodies of men, women, and children who had been starved to death, or brutally murdered, rotted unburied. Wherever a spark of discontent existed, Spain's wandering devils were found to blow it into flame. Country gentlemen and nobles of the court, who, despite cruel persecution and bitter humiliations, still clung to the faith of their fathers, insulted and degraded in the eyes of the law and their neighbours to the very verge of treason, being deceived by specious promises went further and were their victims by the score. On the other hand, if the Puritans hated Catholic Spain, and everything Spanish, as they hated Satan himself, yet they were only restrained from rebellion by patriotism and Protestantism. But thus restrained they were nobly true; praying, even in prisons, at the whipping-post, and on the pillory, that God would preserve their country, and, in His mercy lengthen the life and glorify the reign of their cruel persecutor—that brave, stout-hearted, resolute queen, Elizabeth. It was indeed an evil time, with never a country under the sun that could advance a claim to the possession of civil or religious liberty; and to that time belongs the old Cornish Christmas story we are about to tell.

Sir John Coute was then Her Majesty's Master of Ordnance. He resided on his fine paternal estate at Horeham, near Thaxted, in Essex, not far from where the river Chelmer has its rise. His manor house was a noble building erected by his grandfather in the reign of Henry VIII., with a wide expanse of water beside it and a great park surrounding it. It was famous throughout the land for its frequent feasts and merry-makings.

When the plague, brought home by the English troops from Havre, devastated London in 1563 Sir John, by command of Queen Elizabeth, was constrained to entertain at Horeham Hall, so long as the sickness prevailed, that high and mighty personage, the Spanish Ambassador, together with all his numerous friends, followers, and servants. The cost was ruinous, for Sir John spared for nothing that might give pleasure to his distinguished guests, and was as genial and generously free of hand and purse as if, instead of being on the verge of bankruptcy, he was master of untold wealth.

It was during this visit that a company of players, being also driven by the plague from London, came to Horeham by permission of the gallant young Earl of Essex, whose livery they had the honour of wearing. They were received with hearty welcoming, and were in every respect well used. A stage was put up for them in the great hall, on which they played before the ambassador and his suite, Sir John Coute, his only daughter Editha, and many of the neighbouring lords and gentry. The players were all young men of good learning and manners, twelve in number. They had a wardrobe of great costliness, each man's share in which was valued at about two hundred pounds, then a truly large sum. Its materials were cloth of gold, satin, and velvet, and its ornaments lace and spangles of precious metals. The master was a Fellow of King's College at Cambridge, where he had played before the queen so much to her delight that she had awarded him a pension of twenty pounds per annum. The women's parts were played by some pretty, effeminate-looking, well-trained boys, whose clear, pure voices were very sweet to hear; and, for representing parts too mean to be undertaken by members of the company they had hirelings, the players themselves receiving no regular wage, but sharing all they obtained in common, like a band of loving brothers. You may be sure they did not go empty away from Horeham Hall.

Sir John's daughter Editha was, it is said, “a proper and learned young lady of great gentleness and beauty,” but so majestically tall for a woman, and of such fine proportions, that, as one jocularly said, if dressed as a boy she would look more like one than did either of the real boys who were women-actors, they being so very slight and small in stature that both on and off the stage they looked as much like girls as boys—a saying which Mistress Editha took to heart and brooded over, to her great undoing, as presently was to be perceived. She was a charming creature, this Sir John's daughter, seventeen years old, with a fair oval face of glowing pink and white, large soft grey eyes, and luxuriantly long brown hair. The players, talking amongst themselves, said her presence was more to them than all the rest of the audience—she listened with such eager earnestness to the sweet harmony of their poet's words, her colour coming and going, her breast heaving and falling, and the light in her beautiful eyes melting into softness or flashing into fire as the passions their eloquence appealed to varied with the characters and incidents. One of the women-actors said he would give all he might earn in the next twelve months to see her once play his part, and the odd idea of a gentlewoman turning player to act a woman's part set them all laughing; it was so absurd. But the lad, whose name was Alexander Cooke, said he saw no good reason why women should not be players, and hoped to see them on the stage yet before he died. But he never did.*

Amongst these players was a tall, squarely-built, handsome young man, named John Hemmings, whose playing Sir John's daughter enthusiastically commended; he spoke his lines—she said—with such nice discrimination of tone, and with such deep feeling. The young lady was very curious about him, made many inquiries as to what family he came of, and where his home was. She sighed when they told her that he was of obscure origin, and had been a printer, that his parents resided in Warwickshire, where he was born.† Warwickshire, she said, must be a very long way from Essex, and so saying sighed. And then she wanted to know in what part of Warwickshire he was born? and where he resided when he was not travelling? and what was his age? and altogether took so much interest in this manly young player that she set her attendants laughing and whispering amongst themselves, and grimacing one to another in a way that raised her blushes, and made her speak to them quite angrily, which was not by any means her wont, for she was gentle and soft-spoken even to her horse and dog—especially to her hound, a huge, powerful beast that was her constant attendant.

The players in due time went their way, and the plague having ceased, the ambassador and his locust-like swarm went back to London, and poor Sir John began to be closeted during long interviews with his careworn, anxious-looking old steward. He was so deeply involved in debts and difficulties that it was not likely he would long retain his beautiful park and mansion. Then came a lawyer, with “dapper clerk larded with ends of Latin,” at whom the jolly Sir John swore roundly, but to little effect, and within a month of their going, the knight dismissed his servants, shut up his house, and suddenly went away himself, leaving his daughter to the care of an old friend and neighbour, from whose castle one morning in the summer of 1566, she, too, suddenly disappeared. Her anxious and sorrowing friends and relatives sought for her in every direction for months without success.

In the year following this strange disappearance certain commerce-loving merchants of Genoa, intending to set up a bank in the Low countries, sent out ships, belonging to the province of Biscay, laden with gold and silver money. Being chased by French privateers, they sought refuge off the English shore, and most of them found safety within the great rocky arms of the Cornish coast, at a place then called Smithoke in Vale-mouth (now known as Falmouth), just where the great castles of Pendennis and Saint Mawes stood like giant sentinels to guard the intricate bay. There was in those days no town of Falmouth, merely a blacksmith's forge, which gave the place its name, a few fishermen's huts, and a long, low, rudely-built alehouse, kept by one Dame Arddun, who seldom had to complain of too many customers.

The Cardinal de Chatillon was then a refugee in this country, and when he heard of the treasure of gold and silver being landed on the Cornish coast and taken up into the woodland town of Penryn, which stood close by on the side of a hill, strongly entrenched and walled in, with its three great towers peering over the tree-tops like ambushed giants keeping a stern look-out, he hurriedly demanded an interview at court, where he gave such reasons for detaining the treasure, that the queen and her ministers determined not to give it up.

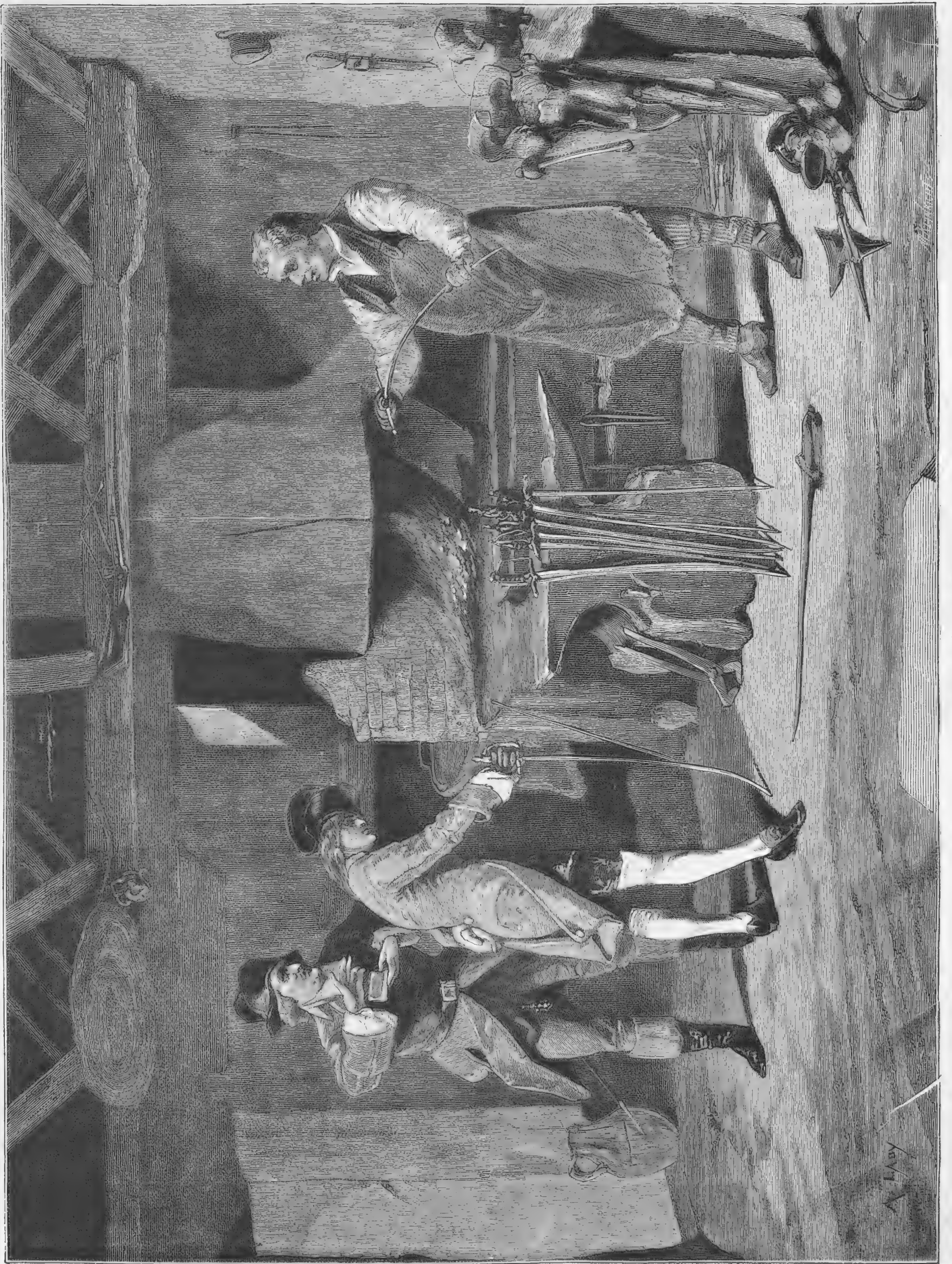
Said the cardinal to the queen, if it goes to the Netherlands, it will merely aid the fiendish Duke of Alva to exterminate the Protestants, and neither the King of Spain nor his creatures have any

* He became famous as a performer of Shakspeare's female characters, and died in 1614.

† Afterwards a great friend of Shakspeare, who mentions him in his will. He was one of the editors of the first printed edition of Shakspeare's Plays, and died a very rich old man in 1630.



"FOLLOW ME!"



HIS FIRST BLADE.

right so to use it; whereas if you hold it in trust for the Genoese merchants, giving fair interest for its use, it will replenish the royal treasury, which sorely needs replenishing, and satisfy the owners, who will know that their capital is safer than it could be in any other hands, and also that they are duly profiting by their venture.

There is, we think, no record of what the Genoese merchants thought of this high-handed arrangement, but that was a matter of very little consequence in those untradesmanlike days. The queen approved the cardinal's politic advice, and so did her great minister, Cecil; and so, when the mighty and terrible King of Spain laid formal claim to the possession of both ships and money, English Elizabeth fearlessly and frankly replied that the money was none of his, and that none of it should he have. As to the ships, they were in Vale-mouth Bay, whence he might fetch them if he could.

The result of this saucy and daring message was Spain's immediate proclamation of war against England.

Then the bold, lion-like "king in petticoats" came forth in her strongest, and the heart of every loyal subject beat proudly high. Armed men sprang up in every direction, and marched towards the coast; beacons were set up on every chalky and rocky headland, crowds of workmen swarmed along the sands and cliffs, rolling huge boulders down or up into the landing gaps, digging trenches, erecting temporary ramparts for the protection of archers and arquebusers, the ordnance, and cannon. Spade and mattock rang out by night and day all along the coast of Cornwall, where torches flared through the long hours of the winter nights, and bands of Saxon workmen and militia came flocking amongst a people to whom they were as foreigners speaking in an unknown tongue; for in Cornwall they still used the language of their old British ancestors, and knew no other. Then Dame Arddun was no longer idle; she was overwhelmed with customers, and she was wearied to death at first by the frequency with which, in reply to demands she didn't understand, she had to answer in her own tongue:—

"Mee a nairdra conza Sawznect" ("I speak no Saxonage").

But in quick time, being stimulated by her love of money, the old Cornish ale-wife not only managed to understand her foreign customers' vigorously-expressed signs and make her own no less vigorously-expressed signs understood, but she actually mastered three entire words in Saxonage, and never any more.

When she presented the wooden mug of ale she would say "Penny," and while that coin—which was the usual price of the drink—was being produced, other impatient and thirsty customers being invariably waiting, she would add, "Come! Quick!" And that was how her inn became known as "Penny-come-quick," and why a portion of Falmouth still bears that name.

CHAPTER II.

On the dark ridge of a rocky hill commanding a wide prospect of dreary and barren moorland, a group of weary horsemen have paused beside a covered waggon, with men and boys a-foot, and a few quiet dogs. A drizzling rain is falling; and coming mournfully out of the mist on their right hand they hear the hollow moaning of the sea. Behind them the rough uncertain track by which they ascended goes down into the mist and gloom. Above is a cloudy sky, fast darkening into night, wild and weird-looking, with a long, low gleam of dusky fire fading in the west. The wind goes by with a sound of outcast loneliness, in sympathy with their melancholy feelings. The men wear broad-brimmed slouched hats, long loose riding boots, and thick capacious cloaks. They are strolling-players, going to Penryn.

"How far are we from Arwinnick House, Petterson?" asks one, shivering as he speaks.

"Are there no taverns in this land of eternal rain and mist?" enquires another, with a sigh.

"I'll pledge thee anon, my boys, and that, too, before a rousing fire and in a can of the best, on the hearthstone of one Arddun, of these parts," cheerfully replies the foremost rider, he who has been addressed as Petterson, adding in his strong, clear, bass voice, "she is a notable ale-wife in the Vale-mouth, at a place called Smithoke. I had hoped to see it from this hill-top, an the mist were less thick and heavy."

"I remember me of Vale-mouth," says a sweet, clear feminine voice from the waggon, "but there is no place near it like this."

Thereupon some muttered oaths and much grumbling.

"If you know the place, boy, get thee out of the waggon and mount behind me," says Petterson.

A slim and graceful youth on hearing this alights, from the heavy vehicle to which an odd team of ill-matched horses and ponies are attached by homely harness of rope, rusty chains, and leather, and springs up behind the last speaker. A handsome lad with an oval face and large soft grey eyes, evidently one of the company's women-actors.

Presently they all descend the hill, the waggon rolling, jolting, and jumping, and the harness chains rattling as they go.

"This," says Petterson, to the pretty boy whose arms are about his waist; "this, Edmund, is that spot of which Diodorous told, first discovered by the brave old Phœnician merchants, who named it the Bolerian coast, and for many years traded with the savage inhabitants, civilising their ways of life, learning their language, and anon telling them strange, incredible stories of the marvellous far-off land whence they came."

"I marvel," says one who now rides besides them, "if those old merchants were as thoroughly drenched with this icy rain as we. I wis not, or they had never come again. Eh, boy?"

"'Tis an old saying of these outlandish regions," answers Petterson, "never a day without one shower or a Sunday without two." Worse than rain are these puzzling cross-roads, or tracks rather—heaven mend them! for roads are they not."

"Look!" exclaims Edmund, suddenly excited, "look! look! there are lights—moving lights—yonder to seaward."

"Well, well, boy, don't leap on my shoulders if there are!" replies Petterson, quietly, as he bends forward and with knitted brows peers dubiously into the mist and gloom beyond.

"Yet," says Edmund, confidently; "I see them still."

The horseman beside them rides on, and presently cries:

"The boy speaks truth. I see them—one, two, three, four, a whole crowd of them."

"Go forward, Will," cries Petterson.

Will, whose other name is Eccleston, puts spurs to his steed, and rapidly disappears. The others listen anxiously to the beat of his horse's hoofs.

"I would we were back in England again," says Edmund, in a subdued tremulous voice, as if to himself; and nobody laughs, for every ear is strained in the direction bold Will Eccleston has taken, and all are anxious.

Presently a low shrill whistle is heard from Will, and at the sign the waggon, horsemen, boys, and men pursue their way.

"Why, boy, you are trembling," says Petterson to his young riding companion.

"With wet and cold," replies Edmund, and the master answers, "Be of better cheer, boy, Penryn cannot be far away."

Presently they all reach Will, who has been waiting for them. He bids them pause and listen. They see the lights now, and hear voices. The dogs growl. A whispered consultation ensues, the result of which is that Edmund alights, the dozen horsemen loosen in their scabbards the heavy broadswords which they all

carry, and look to the huge pistols which each bears in his broad buff belt. The boys leaping into the waggon hand out swords, pikes and bucklers, which the men on foot—the players' hirelings—eagerly receive.

While these things are done Edmund alone stands idle, his limbs trembling, his face white with fear.

One of the dogs, pressing against him, licks his white hand, and utters a sympathising whine, for Edmund is a favourite with the dogs, and, in fact, a general favourite with all but the boys who, rude and rough themselves, when off the stage and out of petticoats, laugh to scorn the timid gentleness of their more studious and quiet companion whom they have contemptuously nicknamed "The Maid."

When all are armed and on the alert, they press forward keenly watchful and cautious, lest they should be taken by surprise, for the costly wardrobe, their common treasury, and all the wealth of this little community of poor poets and players are contained in that lumbering old waggon.

Nearing the sea they find the lights are torches borne by workmen and soldiers who are throwing up fortifications and digging trenches to protect the shore against the Spaniards. Many of these sturdy wielders of spade and mattock are English, who direct the players on their way to Dame Arddun's inn, at Smithoke, which they laughingly call "the Penny-come-quick," and where some few hours after they arrive, thereby creating no little bustle, confusion, and consternation. For Dame Zenobia Arddun's means of accommodation are limited, and they come in the name of a great nobleman who may not be lightly offended in the persons of those who wear his livery. At last horses, men, and boys are all provided for, some scurvily enough. Edmund, overcome with fatigue and excitement, is asleep almost before he has time to pull the wooden block, or cod, serving for a pillow, under his head, creep into the straw, and draw over him the spare dry cloak he has taken from the waggon. One of the three great dogs sleeps at his feet; another, especially his own, for he brought it with him from home when he first joined the company, has its head upon his breast. Many a time have either of these faithful hounds stood his friend when the other boys, taking advantage of his physical weakness and natural timidity, would have treated him roughly. And Edmund is lovingly grateful.

Returning to the rocky ridge where we first discovered the players, after seeing them safely disposed of by sturdy Dame Arddun and her serving maids and men, we take the road they left upon their right. It is now night, and thick darkness prevails. We pass along a wild stony valley and go down to the shore, where we splash through shallow water, for the tide is just upon the turn. Great pieces of rock loom out at us as we near them with vague fantastic shapes, and the tops of the vast jutting cliffs are lost in darkness. There is little for the eye to see, for the moon has gone down, and all we hear is the roar and crash of mighty breakers rolling in towards us from the sea. Consequently we experience a grim sense of utter loneliness and solitude as we still press on. Now we near the place we seek, "The Devil's Frying Pan," where we again ascend.

You must remember, if you please, that we are still what we were to the players—invisible.

Cornwall appears to have been a favourite place with Satan. Never a shire in the kingdom has so many wild stories, or tangible relics of his presence and wicked pranks. But these probably all belonged in the very old, old heathen days, for there is an ancient Cornish proverb still extant which says, "The devil will not come into Cornwall, for fear of being put into a pie."

This is "The Devil's Frying Pan." There is just enough light to see that it is an irregular crater-like hollow, about two acres in extent, and we can tell you what you cannot see, namely, that it is two hundred feet in depth. Ferns, gorse, and grasses grow around its upper edge and slopes, and at the bottom we hear the splashing of water, for the sea is down there, in its vast cave, eternally widening the dark rocky hall, so that the sides, narrowing as they ascend to the upper opening, look like those of a monstrous funnel. This cavern, like several others in its neighbourhood, can only be entered from a boat. Peer down into its darkness through the upper opening. "Hark! Voices! Why the cave is full of boats and men!"

We pass on to another similar cavern, "The Dolor Hugo." Again—boats and men! To another, "Raven's Hugo." This, too, full of boats and men! We hear the clash of arms and the dip of oars, and in the low muttering sounds which reach our ears in a confused murmur, we recognise the Spanish tongue. The Spaniards have secretly landed for an attack upon Penryn; and Spanish soldiers, of all troops in the world, are the most savagely barbarous and cruel. In vain women shriek or children weep, and old men plead to them; death is the least of the horrors they delight in. Almost palsied with fear we hurry away to give the alarm, forgetting for a moment that we are the mere shadow of a thing to be, as helpless to prevent what has been as some day soon we shall be to prevent what may be.

CHAPTER III.

The morning following the night on which the players came to Smithoke was one of great stir and excitement, to which the news of their arrival added not a little. In every house bustle and excitement prevailed. There was much filling and emptying of black-jacks, routed out and cleaned up from every corner for the occasion. The strongest ale was broached, there was a vast spreading of tables and cooking of huge sirloins of beef and pies, of game, capons, turkeys—then new in the land—and geese. Mince pies baked in a crust imitative of the manger in which the infant Jesus lay, were in abundance; plum porridge (pudding) was in everybody's thoughts, and pot. A boar's head with a lemon in its mouth was the chief dish for the day at every Cornish gentleman's hall, where the tenants and neighbours were assembling to be most hospitably and generously entertained, from a very early hour. Presents were received and despatched with gleeful satisfaction. The meanest were cared for by the highest, and the poorest were glad on that morning, for it was the blessed morning of Christmas Day.

Singers were abroad in the narrow streets of Penryn joyously carolling "certayne goodly carowles to the glory of God." Boughs from the evergreen holy (holly) tree decorated the outside and inside of every dwelling in loving memory of rude old days when Christian churches were built of boughs. With the holly mingled bay, rosemary, laurel and mistletoe in memory of their ancient leaders, those once loved and venerated fathers of a grateful people, the Druids, for why should they—heathens though they were—be forgotten on Christmas day? Wassail bowls were carried from door to door, and there were rare brewings of rich drinks for the goodly Loving Cup. Yule logs were burning on every hearth, and due preparations of ribbons gilded and coloured papers, wooden swords, &c., had been made for what was then a great feature of Yule-tide in Cornwall, the Christmas plays, wherein the topics were invariably war and love, St. George and the Dragon being here, as elsewhere, prominent characters.

But this year in the market place of Penryn there was to be a grand new Christmas play, performed by a great nobleman's players, and written for the occasion by a poet from London, one John Hemmings, who was on that morning a guest in the fortified

mansion of the Bishop of Exeter, just without the walls of the town, and near the old granite quarries. A stage had been set up under cover for the occasion, and by noonday people were assembled from all parts to witness it, their voices going up to the grey sky in a roar well known as that of "the Cornish lions." Every window and house-roof commanding a view of the stage had its portion of the audience. The strolling players' great covered waggon was drawn up behind the stage to serve as a kind of green-room, and the dogs kept watch beside it. At a window opposite the stage the bishop and his special friends were stationed; amongst them being the unfortunate Master of Ordnance, Sir John Coute, late of Horeham Hall, Essex, with the Commandant of Pendennis Castle. Nothing was to be heard in the narrow streets but mirthful greetings. No one dreamt of Spain or Spanish blades. Spade and mattock were deserted on that day; soldiers and sailors, miners and fishermen, Cornish and Saxon, all flocked into the town to see the play, and the whole place was full of genial kindness, mirth, and good feeling. The sentinels who kept watch on the city walls, by the headland beacons, and on the towers of Pendennis and St. Mawes, looking out over the sea in every direction, with anxious care, saw never a sail upon its wide expanse, and had no dream of sudden evil.

Alas! they little thought of a danger which came not from the sea. The crafty Spaniards had already landed, and were stealthily marching inland, presently to fall like a thunderbolt upon the unsuspecting merry-makers of Penryn from the heights above the town.

The trumpets sounded thrice, the prologue was spoken; and the play began. Presently one of the boy women-actors appeared upon the boards. Then was witnessed a strange and moving scene. With a mighty shout of "Editha!" Sir John Coute leaped from the balcony in which he had been sitting amongst the Bishop's friends. Tall, powerful, and frantic with anger and astonishment, he forced his way through the crowd and sprang upon the platform, just as, in accordance with the stage directions, there was a great discharge of ordnance, beating of drums, and sounding of trumpets, which had scarcely ceased before shrieks and cries of alarm filled the streets, and from every lip came one great shout of horror:—

"THE SPANIARDS! THE SPANIARDS! OH, GOD! THEY ARE UPON US!"

As the furious Master of Ordnance leaped upon the stage the boy Edmund shrieked aloud and swooned, and Sir John, drawing his sword, would have killed him on the spot had not the players, with difficulty, held him back.

"Infamous wretch!" he cried, for "Edmund" was indeed his lost daughter, and to them, "Unloose your hold, base knaves, and let her die the death of one who has disgraced her name and family as never woman did before! Her blood shall be upon my head, her disgrace on yours, for which, villains, ye shall answer with your lives! I'll have every one of your degraded, lazy, worthless lives! every one, by God! Unloose me, I say!"

A scene of indescribable confusion ensued, and for a time the market-place was a pandemonium of writhing and struggling forms, shrieking, swearing, and calling for arms, with, above all, that hoarse wild cry of horror, "The Spaniards! the Spaniards! Oh, God! the Spaniards!"

But for that cry the poor players would have been torn to pieces by the people as debauchers of an honourable gentleman's daughter. But fear and hate deafened them to all but one thing—the presence of the Spaniards, and so the terrible scene on the stage happily escaped the observation of all but Sir John Arundel, of Trevice, a brave and noble gentleman, who sternly awakened the frenzied father to a sense of his duty as a soldier in this time of deadly peril, and forced him, still raving about his daughter, from the players' stage.

When the town was once again quiet, it became known that the Spaniards had retreated as suddenly as they had advanced, and for this reason:—

They had believed that Penryn was utterly unprepared for defence, one of their spies having told them that on Christmas morning it would be given up entirely to feasting and making merry, and that by mid-day the very sentinels would have stolen from the walls to witness the Christmas festivities. He did not deceive them, for so they found it.

Their forces were within a bolt-shot of the abandoned walls; unobserved and still stealthily advancing, their captains were talking exultingly of plunder, and laughing to think how soon the goodly town would be a heap of blood-soaked smouldering ashes, when they were suddenly astounded and brought abruptly to a halt. A great deafening peal of ordnance burst forth from Penryn, followed by a wild beating of drums and blowing of trumpets in warlike fashion, together with a great shouting like the roar of a stormy sea, whereupon they retreated in hot haste to their boats, venting their disappointed rage and malice upon the huts and mills of the poor, which they left in flames behind them. They were pursued by troops from Pendennis and St. Mawes and in boats, which all but succeeded in intercepting them as they rode out to their ships, which were now seen bearing down upon the coast in full sail, and their last act on English soil was the firing of a parting volley at a body of Cornish men, led by Sir John Coute, who, strange to say, was the only man slain on that memorable occasion, to the great grief of his friend, Sir John Arundel, who often told how, when he left his hall with him to be present at the play in Penryn, he took his—Sir John Arundel's—little girl from her loving mother's arms and, as she shivered at the coldness of his steel corselet, jocularly spoke of corselets and kisses, adding, "Bless you, darling! I, too, have a daughter, and by all that's white, and pure, and innocent I hope this Christmas to greet her here in Cornwall. For I have commissioned a trusty friend to inform her of my whereabouts, and I trust she will be with me ere the day is old." And so he went with Sir John and his armed attendants to meet his daughter, and his death.

Need we add more? For love of John Hemmings and the stage Mistress Editha had done a thing loathsome in the eyes of all true gentlewomen of her time—had consorted with contemptuously-regarded player-folks, had forgotten her rank and breeding, concealed her sex, and, under a feigned name, travelled alone and a-foot to London, where, on the Bankside—the disreputable resort of fiddlers and ballad-mongers and such rude vagrants—she had prayed to be "boy" to a company of players, who, seeing how fair and woman-like she was, had joyously taken her into their fraternity to play women's parts. Need we tell how Sir John Arundel took charge of her, or how he told John Hemmings—Heaven bless us! why they were all Johns—the story of her love, or how John the Poet, firmly believing all the good he heard about her from his fellows, sued for her hand, and some months after, when the grief of her father's death was in part assuaged, was made happy by receiving it. Nor need we add how some years after, when Hemmings and his wife were making merry with Will Shakespeare and another John, John Heywood, the famous dramatist, about a Christmas fire in Stratford-on-Avon, this story was told, to be retold in print, not long afterwards, in the "Apology for Players," which Heywood wrote in reply to the "Pleasant Invective against Poets, Pipers, Players, Jesters, and such-like Caterpillars of the Commonwealth," written and published by Stephen Gosson in the year 1579.

And so we close this old Cornish Christmas story of how the players saved Penryn from the Spaniards.

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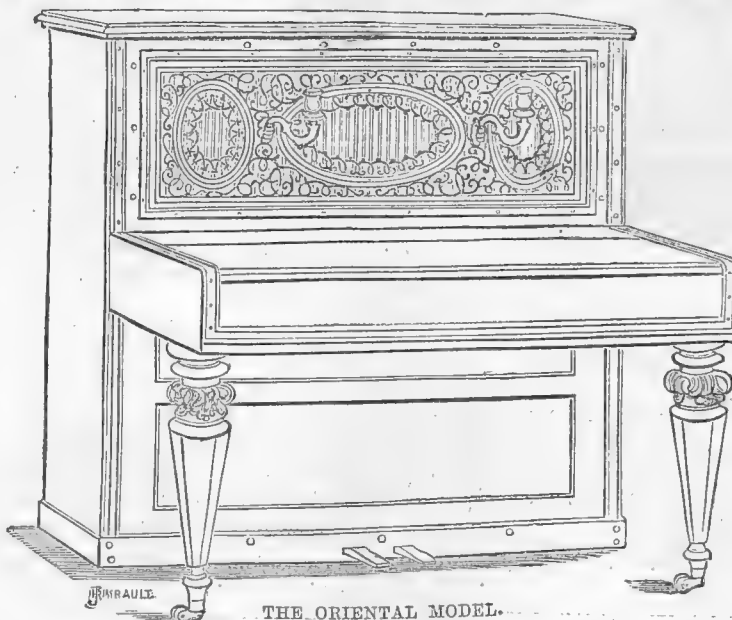
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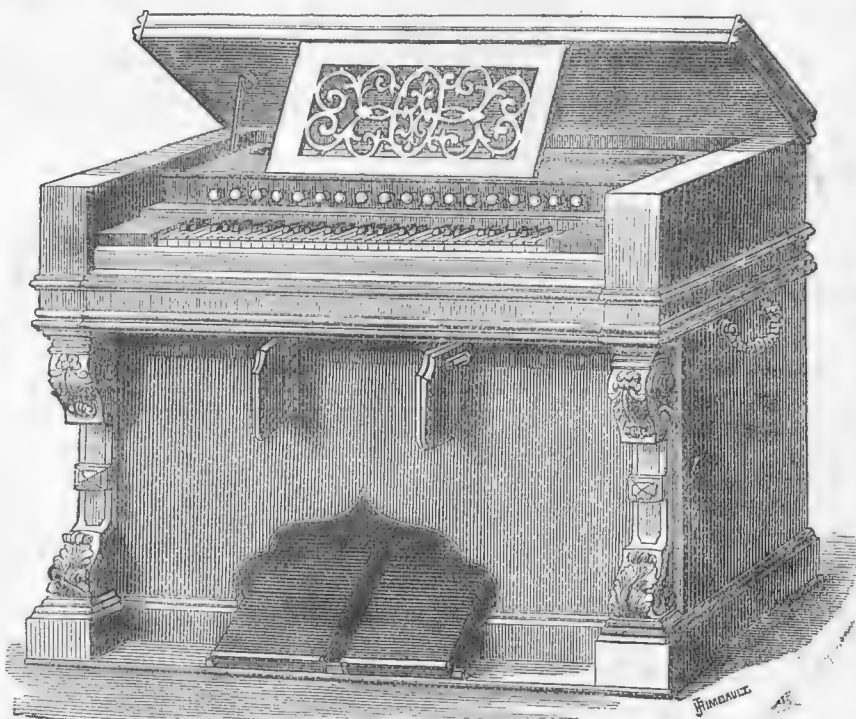
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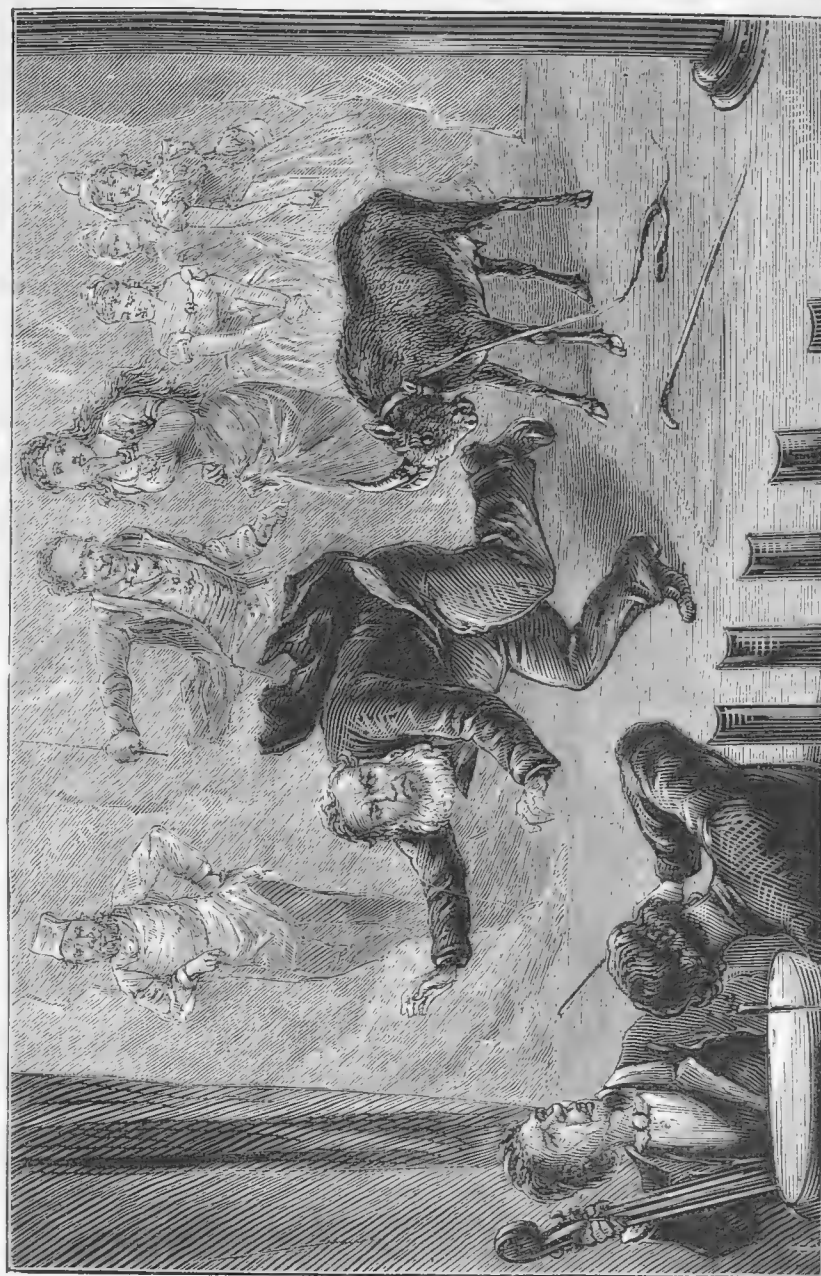
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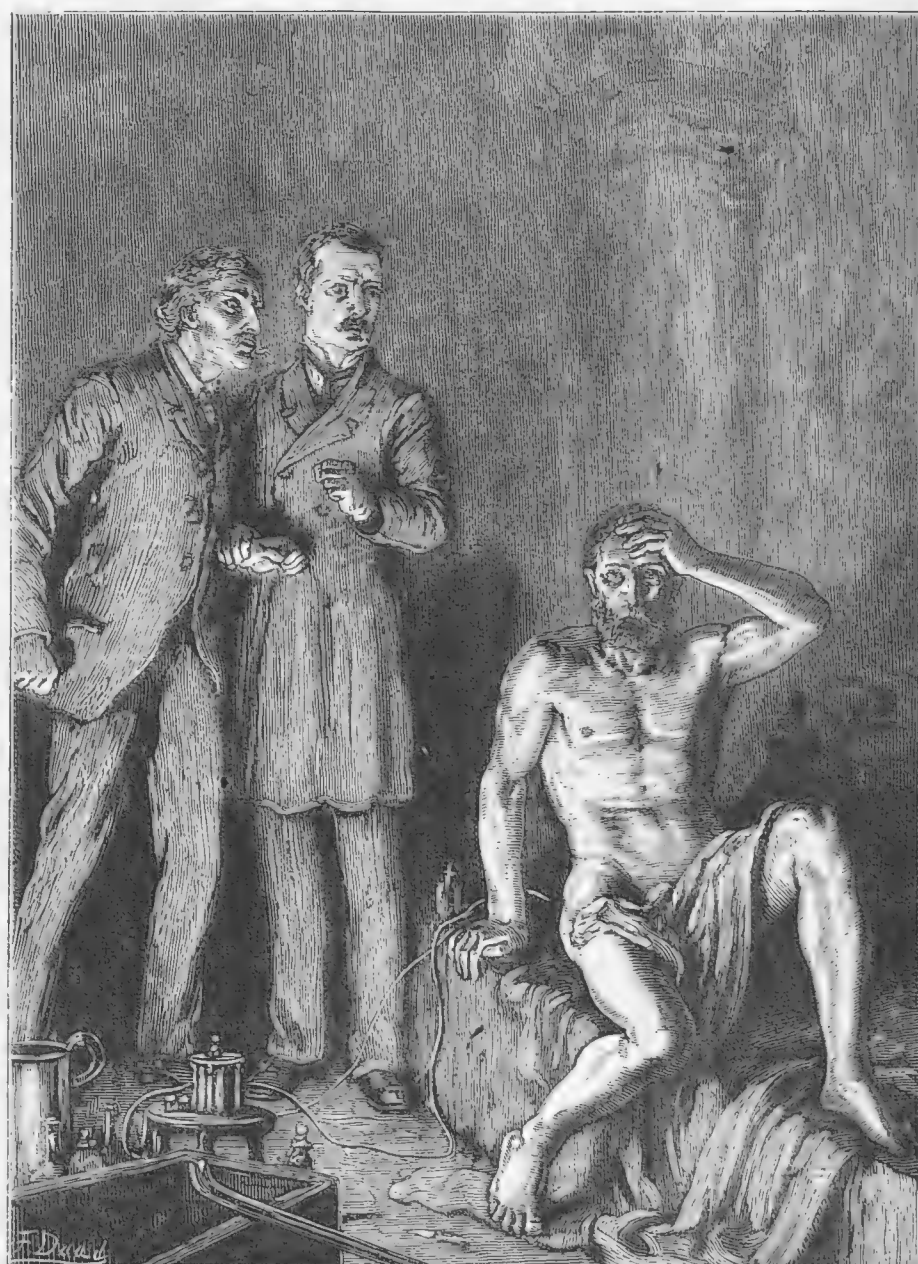
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32	3 5 1	3 13 9	4 9 0	6 0 8
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THE ILLUSTRATED
Sporting and Dramatic News.

LONDON, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1878.

AN OLD MAN'S YULE.

BY H. SAVILE CLARKE.

ANOTHER Christmastide is here,
Like those of long ago,
With carols and with Christmas cheer,
And bells across the snow.
Yet everything seems dreary now,
Ah! Time's a sorry varlet,—
Why e'en the berries on yon bough
Have lost their wonted scarlet.

How strange it seems that Christmas brings
No pleasures as of old;
The crowns of Twelfth Night Queens and Kings
Are tinsel, and not gold.
I read my life back like a rhyme
Of verses palindromic,
To those days when a pantomime
Seemed really to be comic.

Time was,—when coming home from school
The Christmastide was glad;
Time is,—when on the feast of Yule
My heart is strangely sad.
Unbidden guests are in the room,
And phantoms hover o'er me,
Whose ghostly voices in the gloom
Bring all the past before me.

Ah! Postumus, as Horace said,
The years roll on apace;
We mark the seasons by our dead,
And sigh, "God give them grace."
Old age brings nothing but regret,
And memories that appal us;
But still methinks 'tis sadder yet—
To feel what may befall us.

I've stood outside myself and seen,
What other men may see,
How strangely all that might have been
Has never chanced to be.
To-day brings only pain and smart,
As yesterday brought sorrow,
And happiness, Ah! trustful heart,
Comes evermore—to-morrow.

Take down the holly then, and give
The cypress in its stead;
The mistletoe's for lips that live,
And those I kissed are dead.
The sound of bells o'erholt and lea
From many a tower comes rolling;
The merry Yuletide bells!—Ah! me,
They surely should be tolling.

ERRATA.

On page 318, at the end of Chapter I. of "Frighted with False Fire," for
"Mee a naidra cowza Sauznet," read "Mee a naidra" etc. On page 318
—third col.—for *rode read rowed*, and for John the Poet, John the Player.

DOGS OF ALL AGES AND BREED ARE SUBJECT TO WORMS.

SYMPTOMS: Unhealthy appearance of coat, hair looking dead and not lying
smoothly, condition bad although appetite good, spirits dull, nose hot and
dry, and breath offensive. One dose of NALDIRE'S POWDER removes
worms within an hour, at the same time giving tone to the stomach and
producing first-rate condition. WORMS IN A PUG.—"Vicarage, Welley
Rocks, Leek, June 6, 1878.—A very handsome female Pug, which had been
presented to me, seemed very much out of condition, and notwithstanding
great care as to diet, &c., no improvement was perceptible. I therefore
gave her yesterday one of Naldire's Powders, and in fifteen minutes she
brought off a Tapeworm 6 feet in length, with a quantity of slime. You
may add this with my name to your numerous testimonials.—E. Dowman."

NALDIRE'S POWDERS are sold in packets, price 2s., 3s. 6d., 5s., by all
Chemists, and on receipt of stamps by BARCLAY AND SONS, 95,
Farringdon-street, London.—[ADVT.]

“THE RIVALS” AND “FOLLOW MY LEADER.”

At a time when genial memories should be encouraged, when kindly feelings and grateful sentiments should make the fireside holy, shall summer time and childhood be forgotten? Of a verity, No! Let the winds be keen without, frost on the window-pane, snow on the ground, yet hearts are warm within, and in their glow old memories shall for a time re-blossom. Our dog and cat, “THE RIVALS” of our love, our rides on the fallen tree across the brook, when whispering leaves were green, and laughing voices joined the merry shout of “FOLLOW MY LEADER,” are not to be thrust back into oblivion at such a time as this, when to recall them is a pleasure and to talk of them a delight.

“FOLLOW ME.”

’Tis a morning misty, and damp, and mild,
But the sun breaks through, like a wayward child
Wiping the tears of his wrath away,
And holding the forces of winter at bay;
By ways that are deepest in mire, and lanes
Seamed by the channels of autumn rains;
By rides thro’ the forest, and tracks o’er the waste,
There’s walking at leisure, or pricking in haste,
A shimmer of scarlet in yonder brake,
A twinkle of sterns in the scarlets’ wake,
The note of a horn and the voice of a hound,
The crack of a whip and they gather around;
Meetings and greetings with cheer and laugh,
Ripple of banter, and rattle of chaff,
And they hang on the Master’s sign to draw
From his hold in the covert the “bold outlaw.”
They have found in the spinney beside the stream,
Silvery bright in the noontide gleam;
None of your dodging or slippery sort,
But a game old gentleman bent on sport,
A regular devil-may-care of his kind,
And straight as an arrow he makes down wind
For an outlying covert—ten miles or more
They know—for he’s taken the line before:
And the pack settles down on the scent with a will,
Keen, as its followers all, for a kill:
And ’tis easy to see, as the midday sun,
To those who’d look in at the end of the run,
The word must be “for’ard,” and for’ard straight,
With never a hope for a gap or a gate.

’Tis an awkward fence—from its bristling line
Flyer and funder alike incline,
And it frowns with a *noli me tangere* air,
As much as to say to the field, “have a care,”
Sit down in the saddle, keep cool in the head,
And harden your hearts—or else go home to bed.
Light is the Master, and mounted on “blood,”
Never a fence in his line hath stood,
Oxer, or double, or post and rails,
But over them all, like a bird, he sails;
Yet he steadies his horse with a tighter rein,
And thinks, as he drops like a cat in the lane,
Patting the neck of his eager bay,
There’ll be few to ride over my pets to-day.
Tall is the Huntsman—a welter weight—
But he rides to hounds like an arrow straight,
Lifting his horse to the rasping quick,
With only the thought to his pack to stick;
And the Whip, as he follows with eager face,
You may hear him mutter, “A nasty place!”
There’s a funk in rear and a panic in front,
’Mid bruisers and flyers the pride of the hunt,
Wont to be foremost in giving a lead
To duffers and all the incapable breed;
Skirters are out of the fun to-day,
And the hard high road leads the opposite way;
If you stick to a line of gates and gaps
You may hear of the hounds—or you may’n’t perhaps.
’Tis a “nasty place,” and the ditch yawns deep,
There are many to look but few to leap,
Though the “jumping powder” was stiff and strong,
And they lingered over the liquors long.
There are some who come with a swaggering stride,
Then turn like a broken bow aside;
There are more trot up to the hedge and crane,
With a shake of the head, as they turn again;
But most at sight of the fence have flown,
Holding an easier line of their own.
Where is the rider of proven skill,
Lucky, or plucky, or what you will?
Where is the steed that, good at need,
Can favour the field with a timely “lead”?
Ho!—follow me—’tis a fair young maid,
And never a word has the lady said;
But plainer far, in the flashing glance,
And brow’s exulting radiance,
In lips compressed (though not with dread),
In stately poise of the shapely head,
In hands that with coercing rein,
Though seeming slack, her steed restrain,
In shoulders squared, and taper waist
So firmly back in the saddle placed,
In the gathered steed, as he bends his knee,
To a touch like magic that sets him free—
You may read the challenge, “Follow me!”
They have cleared for the maiden an open course,
Through *melée* of baffled and swerving horse;
And half in wonder, and half in dread,
They gaze, as she loosens the chestnut’s head,
Measures her run to an inch, and tries
For the firmest ground by the hedge that lies.
She bends with a feathery pressure and light
To the arching neck of her favourite,
With never a rush as the fence they near,
Nor wavering pause at its edge for fear,
And “heigh over” all have they flown, the pair,
Of fearless maiden and peerless mare.

There are many to cheer, and few to chide,
But none that after her dare to ride;
And the “swell” trots off down the muddy lane,
With plash and puddle his pink to stain,
And the farmer, spurring his lazy cob,
Blurts something out of “a d—d queer job;”
And some make tracks to the nearest tap
To drown in stingo the day’s mishap,
And some determined to have their spree,
Ride rollicking, frolicking, home to tea;
But still their talk when again they meet,
Will be of the day when the best were beat,
Baffled, and “pounded” and sent up a tree,
By the maid whose motto was “Follow Me!”

AMPHION.

CARL ENGHERT’S DEATH.

A TRUE STORY.—BY HARRIETT FISHER.

I WAS born and passed the first fifteen years of my life in Berlin, and being from infancy intended for the army, my studies were all directed to that end. I was intensely happy in the thoughts of my future profession, perhaps not the less so because it made me an object of envy to my favourite schoolfellow and friend, Carl Enghert, whose future was destined to be spent in trade.

No more distasteful career could have been chosen for the high-spirited lad, and when he was taken from school, and placed as apprentice in a shop, he was utterly miserable. His only solace was my society, and every moment I could steal from my studies and he from his business was passed together.

We had not met for some time when I ran into the shop one afternoon, having reason to suppose that the master was out. I found Carl busy with an elderly lady, who appeared to be paying a large bill. The dear fellow’s face brightened as it ever did at the sight of me; with a smile and a nod he motioned me to a chair, and continued to attend to his customer. In a few minutes she left the shop, and then Carl, sweeping the money into a drawer, said, “Run upstairs: I see Wilhelm coming round the corner, and I will follow the moment he comes in to take care of the shop; my master will not be back yet awhile, and we will have a good practice with the chamber pistols.”

Wilhelm was the other apprentice. I did not wait for his arrival—I would that I had!—but ran upstairs as I was bid, and spent the few minutes before Carl appeared in preparing the pistols.

We had indeed “a good practice;” we never had a better. We were both good shots, but on this afternoon we excelled ourselves, and so much did we enjoy the amusement that the flight of time was quite forgotten, until a furious knocking at the door reminded us that the hour we had intended to spend upstairs had been very much exceeded.

Carl, whose hand was raised to fire, let it fall to his side as he turned to me. “Himmel!” he said, “it is after five, and the master has come back.” With a half-comical look of dismay—for he was used to blame on this point—and not much frightened, he opened the door. There, crimson with rage, stood his master, and not his master alone: behind him were two policemen, who advanced into the room. I looked at Carl. The expression on his face was that of intense surprise; neither fear nor guilt was written there, only wonder—wonder which changed to bitter anger at his master’s first words.

“I accuse that youth of theft. Arrest him!”

But before they could approach, or Carl find his voice, I sprang between.

“You shall not touch him; it is false!”

Turning to me, the angry man gave vent to a torrent of furious words. “Liar and thief” were the mildest terms he applied to my poor Carl. He reviled me, too, as an accomplice and instigator, until my indignation overcame my prudence, and I retaliated to the full extent of my power. He soon brought my violent speech to a termination by ordering his two policemen to turn me out of the room. Boy that I was, resistance was useless. I was ejected, and the door closed and locked after me.

All this while Carl had never once spoken; after that one indignant glance he stood in the same spot, white as marble, and as immovable. Only as I was being thrust forth did he rouse himself sufficiently from the shock to say, “Emil, I am innocent.”

“As myself!” I gasped, as I caught one last glance of him.

His face was still stony, but his eyes followed me with love unutterable. I thought then—I know now—that I was the dearest creature on earth to Carl, for he had neither father nor mother, sister nor brother, and I was all to his faithful heart.

Torn with rage, anxiety, and a nameless inexplicable foreboding, I reached my home. I told my mother all, and presently had to repeat the tale to my father, who listened gravely, and to my bitter disappointment seemed by no means so confident of Carl’s innocence as I was. He went to the shop to make inquiries, and returned, after a much longer absence than seemed necessary, even graver than he went.

I was wildly impatient for his report, which, when made, only confirmed my conviction of my friend’s innocence, for he was accused of appropriating the very money I had seen him receive.

The lady who paid it, as it appeared, a very rich and very eccentric widow, one of whose many peculiarities it was never to pay a bill until absolutely compelled. As she was known to be perfectly solvent, this was no bar to her obtaining credit, especially as she never resented the proceedings some of her creditors were occasionally obliged to take.

Carl’s master, Herr Braun, had applied frequently for the payment of a large account, and had at last threatened her with the law, in fact he was out on this very business when she took it into her whimsical head to call and pay. Meeting him directly afterwards, she asked if he had taken proceedings. Being told that he had been reluctantly compelled to do so, she bade him go home and look in the till, showing, at the same time, her account receipted by Carl Enghert. Braun did as he was told, but an examination of the till proved it only to contain the money which had been that day taken. He inquired for Carl, and learned that he was upstairs shooting with me. A hasty and passionate man, he at once jumped to the conclusion that Carl, reckoning on Frau Schmidt’s known peculiarity, had, expecting weeks or months to elapse before it was missed, appropriated the money. He sent for the police at once, and then ensued the scene I have described.

In vain I assured my father that I had seen Carl receive the money and sweep it into the till.

“Didst thou not leave Carl for a moment?” said he.

I could not deny that he had been alone for the very short time between my departure for his attic and Wilhelm’s arrival.

“Time enough to take it out again,” was all he said.

My passionate asseverations that Carl *could* not commit a mean, far less a dishonest, action went of course for nothing with my calm, reasonable father. At last it occurred to me to ask if they had found the money; it must be near if their theory were correct, for he had had no time to convey it away. I thought my father appeared strangely agitated as he replied that they had made no search. This seemed odd, for I thought the first thing done was to search an accused person. My father could, or would, give me no explanation, but silenced my importunity at last by saying, “Let it drop for to-night, my boy; it is a bad business. I hope thy friend may be proved innocent, but I fear it will be difficult. To thy studies, Emil, and forget this affair.”

I obeyed, but study and forgetfulness were alike beyond my power. Carl’s misfortune, Carl’s grief, his love for me, mine for him, above all a perfect conviction of his innocence, filled my mind to the exclusion of all else.

When supper-time came, I closed the books I might as well have never opened, and made a vain attempt to eat.

My father, who was habitually rather reserved and silent, exerted himself this evening to talk to and amuse me; I felt, but could not respond to his kindness, though a chat with my father was usually my greatest treat. He kept me up later than usual, hoping, I suppose, to ensure my sound sleep by sending me tired to bed. His kind intentions were of no avail, for when I lay down I was as wide-awake as if it had been morning.

Carl’s trouble was the first misfortune of my unusually happy

boyhood, and I felt it as much as if the accusation had touched myself. I longed to be with him to sympathise with and console him, and made various plans for obtaining my father’s consent to go to him, although well I knew it was hopeless without stronger proof of my dear friend’s innocence than my own firm, unshaken conviction.

Hour after hour I tossed about, and still sleep seemed as far from me as ever, when about two in the morning I became aware of some other presence in the room.

I had no idea of the time, and my first thought was that my father or mother had come in to see that my candle was extinguished, as I was sometimes guilty of reading in bed contrary to orders. I had not heard the door open, but I did not think of that. I was disinclined to speak, so lay quite still; in another moment a long groan filled the room, and a voice low and broken by gasps of agony—Carl Enghert’s voice, said, “Come, Emil; come, I cannot die without seeing thee.”

I sprang up in bed; quite involuntarily I cried, “Yes, Carl, I am coming.” And then suddenly realising the strangeness—the horror of it—I gave such a cry as quickly brought father and mother and the whole household besides into my chamber. They found sitting up, bewildered and quivering with anxiety and fear.

The first words I could utter were to my father. “Carl,” I said: “something more has happened to Carl—what is it?”

My father looked angrily round at the servants who had followed him and my mother to my room. “Who has been telling my son anything about Carl Enghert?”

Each and all denied having named him to me, indeed opportunity had been wanting, for I had spent all the previous evening until bed-time in the presence of my parents. Only half satisfied, my father now asked me the reason of the disturbance.

I refused to explain in the presence of the servants, but when they had reluctantly left the room I related to him and my mother every impression I had received.

Very kindly and gravely my father strove to soothe me. He seemed now more ready to believe in the possibility of Carl’s innocence, and promised that he should have every assistance that money and influence could command to enable him to prove it. Yet in spite of these professions, and although I knew my quiet, reserved father to be the most strictly truthful of men, I could not help feeling that he was not telling me *all* he knew. I felt, I cannot tell why, that something was suppressed; but it was now after three o’clock. I was almost exhausted with the emotions of the previous twelve hours. I was but fifteen, and had never in my life been awake so late, so no wonder that with my father’s hand lightly clasped in mine, and his kind voice still sounding in my ears, I dropped to sleep at last. When I had been soundly sleeping for about half an hour, my father softly drew away his hand, and whispering to my mother that I was sure to sleep late into the morning now, and that my rest would be sounder if I were alone, as I was accustomed to be, induced her, much against her will, to withdraw.

They could not have quitted my room many minutes before I awoke with the same consciousness of an unseen presence. The square outline of the two windows was just made faintly visible by the breaking day, otherwise the darkness was profound. Again I heard the same long, agonized groan; again the same dear, well-known voice, but fainter and more broken, gasped rather than spoke:

“Emil, dear Emil, why didn’t thou not come? I must die now without seeing thee!” Then the deepest and heaviest sigh which suffering could wring from a human breast, a fainter groan, and silence!

I was not so frightened this time. “Carl,” I cried, “Carl, speak again!” but the silence was unbroken. I rose from my bed, and began hurriedly to dress. The stillness was horrible. “Carl,” I called again, “only speak once more;” but there was no reply. Being now partly dressed, I hurried out to my father’s room. He slept, but I awoke him at once. I told him that I knew something worse than the accusation of theft had happened to Carl. I said I had heard him again. I told him he was dead, and, in my agony of grief, reproached my kind father for keeping me from his bedside.

He listened patiently to the end, and then said, “I hope it is not so bad as thou supposeth, Emil, although I do not understand thy tale; but thou art partly right about Carl.”

He then told me that after I had left Braun’s house the afternoon before, the angry shopkeeper had turned upon Carl, and poured such a torrent of insult, accusation, and vituperation upon him, threatening him with the uttermost punishment of theft, and assuring him that he had seen the last of me, the creature he loved best—perhaps the only one he loved at all—in the world, that the poor, tortured, proud lad, after one or two ineffectual attempts to make himself heard, in an uncontrollable passionate impulse raised the pistol he still held to his head, and discharged its contents into his temple.

The wound was not immediately fatal, and he was carried to the hospital. This was the reason the search had been omitted on the previous day, for Herr Braun was terribly distressed by the result of his furious temper. My father promised that I should go to the hospital as early as I should be admitted, and accompanied me to my room while I dressed myself, encouraging me all the while to hope for the best, although I think he was almost as convinced as I that but little ground for hope existed.

As soon as the hour of admission, which was, I think, six o’clock, approached, I set off. I had to wait a few minutes at the gate, for I was still too early. As soon as I was permitted to enter I asked, as my father had told me, for the doctor who had been on duty the previous afternoon.

Presently a kindly-looking man of middle age approached, accompanied by one of those benevolent women who are the blessing of our hospitals. I made my errand known.

“Carl Enghert?” said the doctor, turning to the woman; “this is the nurse who attended him, for I am sorry to say we could not save him; he died this morning.”

“At what time?”

“About four, I think; it was just daybreak.”

I could restrain myself no longer; I burst into tears—“Oh, Carl! my dear Carl,” I cried; “I did not come, and thou hast died without seeing me!”

The doctor and nurse both started; they looked at each other. “Is your name Emil?” said the latter.

“Yes, Emil von Hartmann.” My sobs prevented me saying more.

Presently the doctor, laying his hand on my shoulder, said, “Will you tell us the meaning of what you have just said?”

I had no desire to conceal what had happened, and had indeed lost all feeling of restraint. I told them every event of the past night. They listened attentively, and at the end of my relation the doctor said,

“The words you heard were really uttered by your friend; in the early hours of the night his whole cry was that he *could* not die—he only once said that he *must* die without seeing you.”

Half an hour later Herr Braun arrived at the hospital in deepest anxiety. He was in despair when he heard of Carl’s death, and will never cease to accuse himself of that innocent blood, most innocent, as he knew by that time, for the first moment of search had cleared my dear Carl’s memory. Only his memory, alas! He had simply, in his hurry to join me, swept the money into the drawer next the till, where no one had thought of looking until the regular search was instituted.

CHRISTMAS IN THE OTHER WORLD.

By H. G. SOMERVILLE.

I AM somewhat inclined to think (which is a bit of tarradiddle to start with) that the title "Christmas in the Other World" may be regarded by my reader as, more or less, a misnomer for the few facts I am about to fictionise. One reason I can give as an excuse for the defective appellation is, that the term "the other world" is not infrequently associated with a hot region, and the country of which I would write is undoubtedly about as warm as they make them. This, to the ordinary mind, will savour somewhat of the jocular, but Christmas at the Antipodes is many degrees removed from a joke, for the thermometer invariably registers at this season from 100 to 120° in the shade.

Some half-dozen years ago I found myself, not that I had been lost, by-the-bye, except in thought, racking my brain as to what on earth I should do in that outlandish region with the few days holiday at my disposal, when a newly-made acquaintance, or "chum," as the Australians have it, saluted me with the pertinent query, "Well, old fellow, and where are you going to spend Christmas?" Of course I hadn't an idea; one seldom has when money and time are at command; the time for great and glorious ideas is when your paucity of pence would prevent the most original and brilliantly conceived schemes from being of the slightest practicability. "Well," said my friend Smith (he was distantly related to the Smiths of London), "why not come with me to Five Wells; my uncle the farmer has sent me my annual invite, and would be delighted to see you, and as for the girls—but I won't make you conceited."

Of course I assured him he need not distress himself on that score, for Nature had kindly done all that was requisite in that respect. "But how," I asked, "could I be expected to disport myself creditably amongst Amazons of the prairie?" for as such I regarded the female occupants of a colonial farm-house. I fancy this must have slightly nettled Smith, for he forthwith reminded me that "his cousins, though possibly not acquainted with the latest Parisian play or familiar with the most recent Belgravia scandal, would be equal to conversing on plenty of subjects which should be intelligible to an English gentleman." I felt I had merited this rebuff, so went out of my way (F. W. is sixty-six miles up country) to make my apology.

The first twenty miles of our journey was effected by rail, and I would that I could say it was a bit of pleasant railery, but unfortunately the jolting was so much more conspicuous than the joking that I remember we were both rather disposed to rail at fate for causing the fate to be ours to travel by rail.

Arrived at the farm, I was introduced to the Misses Smith—six in number—who all grasped me by the hand and overwhelmed me with thanks for honouring them with my presence, the elder ones apologising profusely for the domestic arrangements, which they feared I should think dreadfully homely. Considering, however, that I could see nothing about the place which reminded me at all of home, I was enabled to assure them, with perfect truth, that such was not the case.

The girls were not ugly; on the contrary, most people would have credited them with good looks, but they had a certain indescribable sort of brusqueness which denied them their full meed of appreciation, an impression very possibly created by my thinking, at this time, that all girls of colonial birth must necessarily have ancestors whose residence in Australia had been brought about by necessity rather than choice.

Though they all professed the first night of my visit to be the most pleasant evening they ever remembered to have passed, I cannot refrain from remarking that to my mind it was just the least bit slow. I was betrayed into singing some comic medleys without any accompaniment (how I wished myself a Moore and Burgess minstrel that night—they never perform out of London), in consequence of one of the damsels offering to sing afterwards if I would oblige. I assented, and, in reference to her singing, I may say that "Rosalie, the Prairie Flower," had no charm for me.

That the whole family were of a retiring disposition was practically manifested about nine o'clock p.m., much to my inward satisfaction, though the reason assigned for this somewhat early departure to the land of Nod was not equally acceptable. It transpired that Christmas Day was to be devoted to a picnic by the seashore, some twenty-five miles distant, to be reached on horseback—there would be a party of about forty experienced equestrians, and Miss Smith, in the goodness of her heart, had bespoken her father's favourite blood-mare for me!

I can say with perfect truth that usually I am a man of repose (especially at night time), but this unexpected and unwelcome announcement was more than sufficient to render me the reverse. A few minutes before I had shown unmistakable signs of weariness and want of sleep, but now I was thoroughly awakened; awake to the uncomfortable consciousness of coming evil. When the girls asked me if I were fond of riding I said "Yes;" but casually remarked that I was rather out of practice, the honest truth being that I had only once in my life ever attempted to get outside a horse, and then it was suggested by the boys at Blackheath that it would have been better for me to have got inside. I was perfectly aware that I had scored by my singing, &c., that evening, and I could not help thinking

that this idea of putting me on a blood-mare was but a fiendish plan formed by Miss Smith, out of revenge, to humiliate me. In vain I cudgelled my brain for an excuse to save me from the *exposé* which I felt was inevitable.

Luckily, when I joined the breakfast table in the morning the anxiety of mind that I had suffered through the long sleepless night told the unmistakable tale that there was something the matter with me. Sympathy poured in upon me on every side. Old Mr. Smith thought one thing was the matter with me, old Mrs. Smith thought another, and each of the Misses Smith suggested something else as the cause of my indisposition, Miss Smith wanting very much to send for the family doctor who lived quite near, according to their idea, being only thirteen miles away.

As they all declared that they would not go unless I were able to accompany them, and also said if I rode an old horse called "Dosey," it would be like sitting in an arm-chair, I consented to make the venture, my spirits visibly improving when I found I had got over the difficulty of the thoroughbred racer.

I can never forget that excursion. It has always surprised me that I didn't attempt to mount on the wrong side of the animal, my not doing so being attributable solely to good luck, though I believe that any eccentricities of equestrianism on my part would have been overlooked by my friends, so satisfied were they that I was *hors(e) de combat*. Smith, to whom I afterwards confessed my inexperience, admitted that the Australian style of riding was different to mine, the colonials not being in the habit of leaving enough room between themselves and the saddle for the insertion of a half-quarter loaf, nor was it their custom to find themselves ever and anon embracing the horse's neck. After a little time, however, I managed to canter pretty fairly, though, from the defective nature of my seat, I wobbled about most awfully when we came to a sudden standstill, and was not sorry when we arrived at our destination.

I am afraid I was so intent upon keeping my equilibrium that much of the scenery was lost upon me, though I remember that it was of the most varied character. At one time we passed through a place resembling an English wood, where the track was only determined by the prints of horses' hoofs and the rucks made by [the wheels of] bullock-waggons. Then we emerged on to the skirts of some plains with unpronounceable names, and of fabulous extent, reaching at any rate further than the eye could follow; but the prevailing characteristics of the country (South Australia) seemed to be gigantic ranges of mountains looking very dark and rugged, and, doubtless, in the eyes of some, very grand, but looking to me only very big, like everything Australian.

The one thing that did impress me was the heat, which was terrific; the effects of the sun being the thing most likely to strike a stranger fresh from home, though I have been given to understand that new chums are not so liable to sunstroke as one would imagine.

Heat, apparently, is one of those things which are nothing when you are used to them, for the majority of the party (who arrived almost directly after we did) indulged in amusements of so active a character as to lead one to suppose they were trying to keep themselves warm rather than cool. No sooner had they refreshed themselves than they set to work organising horse-races and feats of strength, which were continued almost without intermission until we returned. I need hardly say I did not join in these arrangements, preferring to play the invalid with a spinster on the shady side of thirty, rather than play the fool on horseback with the sun at about 140°.

Dinner was indulged in in due course, or courses, and though hot roast beef did not form one of the dishes, there was some splendid cold wild turkey, which amply atoned for the absence of the other English yule-tide fare. After dinner, healths were drunk and speeches made, and then came what was regarded by all the ladies present as the event of the day—the cutting and eating of the Christmas Cake.

This was a large cake in which a wedding-ring had been placed, and it (the cake) was cut up into as many pieces as there were unmarried persons present, the idea being that whoever had the luck to get the portion with the ring would have the good fortune to be married within a year. This naturally gave opportunity for much joking and laughing while it was being demolished, but when the last crumb had been eaten, lo and behold! no one had discovered the ring! Of course, everyone thought that Mrs. Smith had forgotten to put it in, and chaffed her accordingly; but the old lady was so positive that it had been inserted, and was so anxious that it should be found, that no one could have possibly doubted her. That being the case, it was suggested that someone had it but did not want to "own up." This, however, was not feasible, and therefore there was only one remaining suggestion to make—that someone had swallowed it!

Although this solution of the mystery was received, generally speaking, with shouts of derision, after a few minutes I noticed that many of the young people were not so lively as they had been. In more than one instance I heard it said in an undertone, "I wonder if one of us has really swallowed it! I really don't feel very well," and one gentleman I detected trying to bring about a revulsion of nature by inserting his fingers into his throat, an attempt which was futile as far as the ring was concerned, and only succeeded in making him, like me, somewhat sick—of Christmas in the other World.

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